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Hurricane Response:

Zoned for Displacement, City Lab, 9/13/17

<https://www.citylab.com/equity/2017/09/climate-changes-inevitable-displacement-of-most-vulnerable/539232/>

Hilton Kelley has been sounding off on Facebook Live the past few days about families who evacuated their homes to escape Hurricane Harvey and are now getting eviction notices. The families live in Port Arthur, Texas, the small Gulf Coast city about 90 miles east of Houston, but are currently scattered across Louisiana and Texas. Kelley himself had to evacuate—his fourth time doing so in the last 15 years due to hurricane flooding—but was able to make it back to his home last week.

2 Harvey Flooding Potentially Compromised 650 Chemical Plants, Triple Pundit, 9/13/2017

<http://www.triplepundit.com/2017/09/harvey-flooding-potentially-compromised-650-chemical-plants/>

The Union of Concerned Scientists has assembled a list of facilities potentially impacted by flooding related to Hurricane Harvey, and the picture may surprise those who focus on Superfund sites. There are a lot of potential chemical stews brewing along the Gulf coast — 650 of them.

3 Galena Park gasoline spill dwarfed other Harvey leaks, but stayed out of public eye for days, Houston Chron, 9/13/17

<http://www.houstonchronicle.com/business/article/Galena-Park-gasoline-spill-dwarfed-other-Harvey-12192956.php>

Jesse Perez, 41, a longtime resident of Galena Park, said he had grown accustomed to the smells of refineries and other plants in this heavily industrial community on the east side of Houston. But in that days that followed Hurricane Harvey's departure from the area, he said he never smelled such strong gasoline odors in his neighborhood. "It was a heavy smell, and it even carried inside our house," Perez said. "We had to put air fragrances in the rooms just to air out the house."

4 Swarmed with mosquitoes after Harvey, Texas calls in the US Air Force, Quartz, 9/13/17

<https://qz.com/1075935/swarmed-with-mosquitoes-after-harvey-texas-calls-in-the-us-air-force/>

In an effort to combat the swarms of mosquitoes apparently making mating grounds out of the standing water left behind from Hurricane Harvey, Texas has called in the big planes. The state asked the US Air Force to spray 6 million acres in the state with insecticide from in its low-flying C-130 cargo planes. The Air Force has long used its planes in mosquito-control missions.

5 Will Rebuilding After Harvey and Irma Make More Flooding Inevitable?, New Yorker, 9/13/17

<https://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/will-rebuilding-after-harvey-and-irma-make-more-flooding-inevitable>

The aim of the National Flood Insurance Program, which was created by Congress, in 1968, in the aftermath of Hurricane Betsy, is to provide "affordable insurance to property owners." The program offers what amounts to subsidized coverage, and according to its critics, and also to some of its supporters, the N.F.I.P. has had the perverse

effect of encouraging rebuilding in areas where homes and businesses probably shouldn't have been built in the first place.

6 Iowa corn growers see benefits of lifted ethanol restrictions after Hurricane Harvey, KCRG, 9/13/17

<http://www.kcrg.com/content/news/iowa-corn-growers-see-benefits-of-lifted-ethanol-restrictions-after-Hurricane-Harvey--444183373.html>

After Hurricane Harvey, consumers saw gas prices rise in Iowa and around the country. This is the trend from GasBuddy.com., where the red line shows the spike in Iowa gas prices, compared to the national trend in blue. The hurricane shut down oil and gas refineries so the EPA lifted certain restrictions on ethanol fuels to help after the storm.

7 Texas begins long march toward recovery from Hurricane Harvey, Tribune, 9/12/17

http://baycitytribune.com/news/article_ad481804-9835-11e7-8f7f-1312ca29281a.html

As contaminated waters receded and mountains of debris from flooded homes and ruined belongings grew last week, a picture of post-hurricane Texas developed and the process of weighing impacts to lives, property and infrastructure began.

Gov. Greg Abbott delivered a series of announcements and proclamations related to catastrophic flooding and wind damage brought by Hurricane Harvey to more than 50 Gulf Coast and inland counties in late August and early September.

8 Weeks after Harvey, floodwaters still pose threats to Houston residents, CBS, 9/12/17

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/harvey-floodwaters-threats-houston/>

Nearly three weeks after Harvey drowned Houston, people like Mike Gregg are still digging through the debris, and realizing just how much they lost. Two feet of water soaked everything, including the family piano. "It was my wife's," Gregg said. "Something that was very valuable to her."

9 EPA approves emergency fuel waivers for 38 states, Washington, D.C., Agri Pulse, 9/13/17

<https://www.agri-pulse.com/articles/9837-epa-approves-emergency-fuel-waivers-for-38-states-washington-dc>

As a result of the continuing impacts on refineries near the Gulf Coast and disruption to the fuel distribution system caused by Hurricanes Harvey and Irma, Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt exercised EPA's emergency fuel waiver authority to help ensure an adequate supply of fuel throughout the country.

10 Terminals, refiners clean up spills after Harvey, Argus, 9/12/17

<http://www.argusmedia.com/news/article/?id=1533319>

Refineries and terminal operators around Houston have reported spilling thousands of gallons of diesel and gasoline in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey. Magellan Midstream Partners says hurricane-related flooding caused the spill of 10,988 bl of gasoline from two storage tanks at its Galena Park facility, which is located next to the Houston Ship Channel. Some of the spilled gasoline flowed into a ditch near the channel and a "small amount" reached the water, the company says.

11 (Video) Analysis Estimates 4.6 Million Pounds Of Chemicals Spilled During Hurricane Harvey, Beaumont Enterprise,

<http://www.beaumontenterprise.com/news/media/Analysis-Estimates-4-6-Million-Pounds-Of-1020092.php>

Flooding from Hurricane Harvey overwhelmed existing safety precautions at many chemical plants. According to Business Insider, the floods released 4.6 million pounds of chemicals overall--some carcinogenic. Advocates have expressed concern about potential health effects, but federal and state representatives said there is little reason for

alarm. The EPA is working with Texas state regulators to clean up spills from a dozen industrial facilities. However, representatives say it's still too early to estimate the amounts spilled.

Around the Region:

9 The 10 costliest hurricanes in U.S. history, Times Picayune, 9/13/17

http://www.nola.com/hurricane/index.ssf/2017/09/10_costliest_hurricanes_in.html#incart_river_index

The 10 costliest hurricanes in U.S. history, even when damage estimates are adjusted for inflation, all occurred in the past 30 years. All but two of them struck in the 21st century. The storms hit Florida (6), Louisiana (4) and Texas (2), as well as Alabama, Mississippi, New Jersey, North Carolina and South Carolina (1 each). Most of the big ones struck more than one coastal state.

10 First recorded hurricane on Gulf Coast made landfall 300 years ago: report, Times Picayune, 9/12/17

http://www.nola.com/environment/index.ssf/2017/09/the_first_recorded_hurricane_t.html#incart_river_index

Floodwaters in two Houston neighborhoods have been contaminated with bacteria and toxins that can make people sick, testing organized by The New York Times has found. Residents will need to take precautions to return safely to their homes, public health experts said. It is not clear how far the toxic waters have spread. But Fire Chief Samuel Peña of Houston said over the weekend that there had been breaches at numerous waste treatment plants. The Environmental Protection Agency said on Monday that 40 of 1,219 such plants in the area were not working.

11 Post-Harvey, Houston officials hope Congress is up for funding Ike Dike, Texas Tribune, 9/12/17

<https://www.texastribune.org/2017/09/12/after-dismissing-need-storm-surge-barrier-sylvester-turner-says-housto/>

Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner on Tuesday gave his strongest endorsement to date for constructing a physical coastal barrier to protect the region from deadly storm surge during hurricanes. Though such a barrier system would not have guarded against the unrelenting and unprecedented rain Hurricane Harvey dumped on the area, Turner — one of the region's last leaders to endorse the "coastal spine" concept — said at a Tuesday news conference that he believes it is crucial.

12 Harvey, Irma could boost oil glut by 43 million barrels, Houston Chron, 9/11/17

<http://www.houstonchronicle.com/business/energy/article/Harvey-Irma-could-add-43-million-barrels-to-U-S-12188157.php&cmpid=twitter-premium?cmpid=twitter-premium>

The nation's oil stockpile could surge by tens of millions of barrels this month after Hurricane Harvey paralyzed the Gulf Coast refining complex, Goldman Sachs said Monday. The investment bank believes U.S. oil inventories could end the month 43 million barrels larger in the wake of Harvey and Hurricane Irma, which began pummeling Florida over the weekend.

13 Harris County Commissioners Approve Funding For New Stormwater Basins, Houston Public Media, 9/12/17

<http://www.houstonpublicmedia.org/articles/news/2017/09/12/236893/harris-county-commissioners-approve-funding-for-new-stormwater-basins/>

Harris County Commissioners have approved more than \$1 million to improve flood control. Much of the money will help build new ponds to hold stormwater along Houston-area bayous. One of them is a more than \$500,000 project in the Inwood Forest area along White Oak Bayou. Another would be built along Little Cypress Creek in Northwestern Harris County, and another in Aldine near Greens Bayou is moving forward as well.

14 FOLLOWING HURRICANE HARVEY, TEXAS GAS PRICES ARE ALREADY COMING DOWN, Texas Standard, 9/11/17
<http://www.texasstandard.org/stories/categories/energy-environment/>

Despite reduced gasoline production in the areas of Texas affected by Harvey, prices should return to just above \$2 per gallon, by the end of the year. Matt Smith, director of commodity research at ClipperData, says that while crude oil prices waver, natural gas prices remain unchanged.

15 Tracking Harvey's financial toll: New damage estimate rises to nearly \$200 billion, Dallas Morning News, 9/13/17
<https://www.dallasnews.com/news/harvey/2017/09/12/tracking-harveys-financial-toll-new-damage-estimate-rises-nearly-200-billion>

Two university researchers who study flood damage are out with a new estimate that would establish Hurricane Harvey as the costliest storm in U.S. history. Michael Hicks of Ball State University and Mark Burton of the University of Tennessee predict damage to homes, businesses and public infrastructure along the Texas Gulf Coast will end up costing roughly \$198 billion. That exceeds the price tag they put on Hurricane Katrina, which in today's dollars would have totaled \$194 billion.

16 Texas sues Dallas-area gas station operator over Hurricane Harvey price gouging allegations
<https://www.dallasnews.com/news/harvey/2017/09/12/texas-sues-dallas-area-gas-station-operator-hurricane-harvey-price-gouging-allegations>

Consumer complaints about price gouging were making waves across social media channels following Hurricane Harvey. Now, Attorney General Ken Paxton's office is taking action against some businesses. Paxton's office filed lawsuits Tuesday against three companies — one of them a local gas station owner — alleging price gouging. His office received 3,321 complaints related to Harvey.

17 Follow the money: industrial waste site in Alsen, local nonprofit organization and neighbors at odds even before the site has opened, Advocate, 9/12/17
http://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/news/environment/article_5097d468-97d7-11e7-9cec-9b2057590393.html

A three-way argument has broken out among the owners of an industrial waste site in the Alsen community north of Baton Rouge, a local nonprofit and residents of the area. In 2007, the owners of the Brooklawn Drive facility signed a contract with a newly formed nonprofit. The intent was for the company to donate money to benefit the Alsen and St. Irma Lee neighborhoods in exchange for building a new site to accept hazardous waste.

18 Texas begins long march toward recovery from Hurricane Harvey, Tribune, 9/12/17
http://baycitytribune.com/news/article_ad481804-9835-11e7-8f7f-1312ca29281a.html

As contaminated waters receded and mountains of debris from flooded homes and ruined belongings grew last week, a picture of post-hurricane Texas developed and the process of weighing impacts to lives, property and infrastructure began. Gov. Greg Abbott delivered a series of announcements and proclamations related to catastrophic flooding and wind damage brought by Hurricane Harvey to more than 50 Gulf Coast and inland counties in late August and early September.

19 Koch Brothers Versus Small Town USA, Earth Island Journal, 9/12/17

http://www.earthisland.org/journal/index.php/elist/eListRead/koch_brothers_versus_small_town_usa/

The riveting Company Town is one of the hardest-hitting documentaries ever made about environmental racism in America. It is to the eco-justice movement what Barbara Kopple's 1976 Best Documentary Academy Award winner Harlan County USA was to class struggle or Al Gore's 2007 An Inconvenient Truth was to climate change or Josh Fox's Oscar-nominated 2010 Gasland was to fracking. It appears to be a classic case of environmental injustice, wherein people of color and the poor are singled out to bear the brunt of well-funded, string-pulling corporations and businesses.

20 River authority says flooding has led to death threats, ABC, 9/13/17

<http://abc13.com/river-authority-says-flooding-has-led-to-death-threats-/2410079/>

Frustration and blame over severe flooding in the Kingwood area has led to death threats, according to the San Jacinto River Authority. It all stems from questions over the group's decision making before and immediately after the flooding related to Hurricane Harvey. Some Kingwood homeowners said those in control of dams and waterways like the SJRA may have some liability for the decision they made before the water started to rise.

21 TCEQ investigating claim that Hurricane Harvey swept Portland plant's material into bay, Caller Times, 9/12/17

<http://www.caller.com/story/news/2017/09/12/tceq-investigating-claim-hurricane-harvey-swept-portland-plants-material-into-bay/657585001/>

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality officials on Monday confirmed they were investigating a claim material from a Portland iron production facility was swept into Corpus Christi Bay following Hurricane Harvey's landfall last month. "The TCEQ received information from a resident regarding concerns that metallic black dust from residents' homes and the Voestalpine plant was swept into a lake and then into the bay," Andrew Keese, media relations specialist with the TCEQ, said in an e-mail to the Corpus Christi Caller-Times.

22 Homeland Insecurity: How ready is New Mexico for when disaster strikes?, NM Political Report, 9/12/17

<http://nmpoliticalreport.com/456144/homeland-insecurity-how-ready-is-new-mexico-for-when-disaster-strikes/>

David Silver thinks about the bad things: floods, fires, nuclear meltdowns, zombie apocalypses. As the city of Santa Fe's emergency management director, it's his job and, though that last one might sound goofy, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention a few years ago created a graphic novel about a zombie pandemic moving across the country.

23 Air quality alert in effect Wednesday in central Oklahoma, Oklahoman, 9/13/17

<http://newsok.com/article/5563883>

An air quality alert is in effect Wednesday for central Oklahoma, the National Weather Service reports. The alert covers Canadian, Cleveland, Grady, Lincoln, Logan, McClain, Oklahoma, and Pottawatomie counties. The Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality advises people with respiratory or heart problems to limit outdoor activity and physical activities due to high concentrations of ozone, the weather service reports.

24 Ozone Alert issued for Tulsa County Wednesday, ABC Tulsa, 9/12/17

<http://ktul.com/news/local/ozone-alert-issued-for-tulsa-county-wednesday>

The Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality has issued an Ozone Alert for the Tulsa metro Wednesday.


25 Meeting focuses on Plum fracking wastewater disposal project, Trib Live, 9/12/17

<http://triblive.com/local/plum/12725221-74/meeting-focuses-on-plum-fracking-wastewater-disposal-project>


A meeting to discuss a proposed wastewater injection well in Plum will feature experts in the field of fracking — a technique to extract oil and gas from rock by injecting high-pressure mixtures of water, sand or gravel and chemicals.


Council President Michael Doyle said he hopes to hear from those for and against the project. A registration form to sign-up for the meeting is expected to be available on the borough's website this week.


Harvey Flooding Potentially Compromised 650 Chemical Plants


by Tina Casey (<http://www.triplepundit.com/author/tina-casey/>) on Wednesday, Sep 13th, 2017  CLIMATE & ENVIRONMENT (<http://www.triplepundit.com/category/climate-environment/>)


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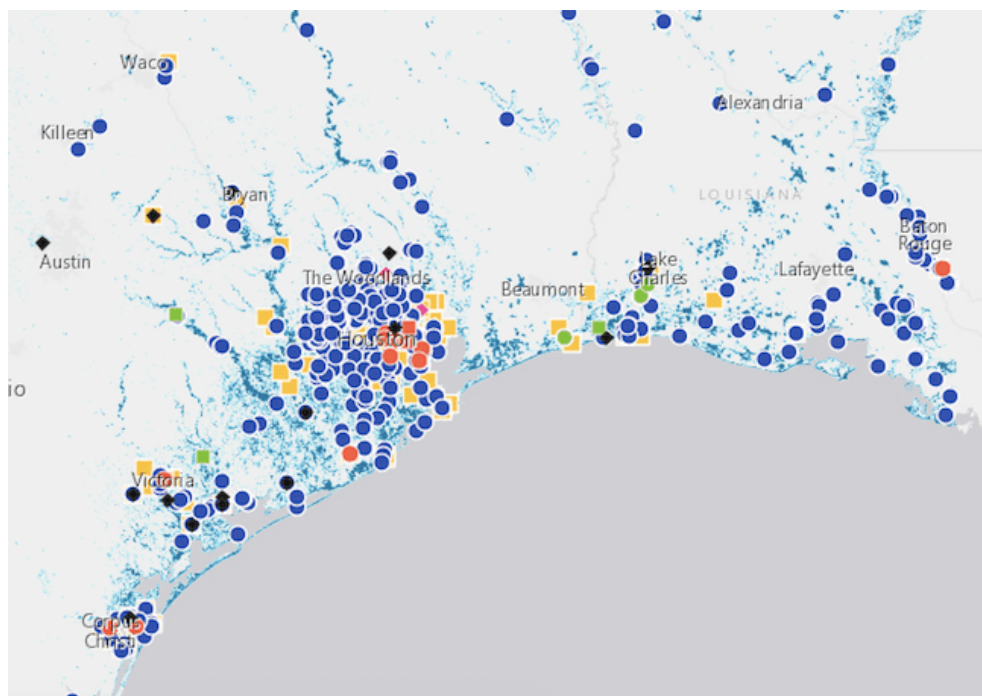
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 (<http://www.triplepundit.com/2017/09/harvey-flooding-potentially-compromised-650-chemical-plants/#print>)



The Union of Concerned Scientists has assembled a list of facilities potentially impacted by flooding (<http://blog.ucsusa.org/kristy-dahl/flooded-by-hurricane-harvey-new-map-shows-energy-industrial-and-superfund-sites>) related to Hurricane Harvey, and the picture may surprise those who focus on Superfund sites. There are a lot of potential chemical stews brewing along the Gulf coast — 650 of them.

The full extent of the environmental impact won't be known until the sites are assessed, but for now the UCS's list — culled from satellite images of flooded areas — provides more evidence of the need to invest in infrastructure that resists the impact of intensive weather events.

650 facilities flooded by Harvey (more or less)

The flooded areas have been delineated by the Dartmouth Flood Observatory, which uses satellite imagery that resolves to 10 meters, and the facilities list may contain some imprecise or inaccurate locations (the list was gleaned from data compiled by the US Energy Information Agency and EPA).

UCS cautions that its list is not a definitive one in terms of measuring environmental impacts, partly because some of the facilities (or hopefully, most of them) within the Harvey-flooded areas may have been sufficiently prepared, and partly because its data sources are not accurate with pinpoint precision.

On the other hand, although fewer than 650 facilities could be impacted, it is possible that the environmental impacts extend beyond the bounds of each facilities' walls.

The list only covers three types of plants for which data is available: energy infrastructure including refineries and power plants, wastewater treatment plants, and three types of chemical facilities including Superfund sites as well as sites covered by EPA's Toxic Release Inventory and Risk Management programs.

As a final note, the UCS list includes almost 430 wastewater treatment facilities. Regardless of whether they are municipal or industrial facilities, the impact of Harvey could potentially include environmentally harmful releases of untreated waste as well as treatment chemicals stored on site.

Rethinking flood preparation

One lesson learned from Harvey is the need to revise protocols for chemical facilities to prepare for hurricane and flood events.

According to UCS analysis, almost 200 facilities in the flooded areas are included in the three categories covered by EPA, including at least seven superfund sites.

The Superfund sites have been getting a lot of media attention, but those are inactive sites under remediation plans. The active facilities can cause just as much if not more harm. UCS explains:

Before the storm hit, many facilities shut down preemptively, releasing toxic chemicals in the process. In the wake of the storm, explosions at Arkema's Crosby facility highlighted the risks that flooding and power failures pose to the region's chemical facilities and, by extension, the health of the surrounding population.

That's an especially acute public health consideration for low income communities, which tend to be clustered near industrial sites.

A more environmentally-oriented approach to storm preparation is also a bottom line consideration. The Arkema disaster (http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/U/US_HARVEY_TXOL-?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT&CTIME=2017-08-28-09-31-56), for example, resulted in a \$1

million lawsuit filed by first responders who were sickened by a chemical fire after Harvey flooded the facility. The Associated Press reports:

The suit in local court alleges Arkema failed to properly store the chemicals considering how prone the region is to floods. The chemicals became unstable and exploded in flames on Aug. 31 after refrigeration was lost to generator failures.

As of this writing, the responders are seeking a restraining order that would prevent Arkema from altering the site until an investigation takes place.

The case for biofuel

The high concentration of refineries and storage tanks along the Gulf coast is another area of concern. TriplePundit has been among the many to observe that the ripple effect on fuel prices (<http://www.triplepundit.com/2017/09/gas-prices-spike-texas-wind-farms-grid-hold-steady-harvey/>) reached far beyond the immediate area of Harvey's impact.

The Associated Press, for example, counted more than two dozen individual storage tanks that "ruptured or otherwise failed" (https://apnews.com/0485b3c424be4ce3bb555cf16a88f3bd?utm_campaign=SocialFlow&utm_source=Twitter&utm_medium=AP) during Harvey, resulting in the release of 145,000 gallons of fuel as well as airborne pollutants.

Harvey flooding also resulted in the shutdown of the troubled Colonial Pipeline (<https://cleantechnica.com/2016/11/02/americas-opec-part-ii-new-gas-pipeline-mess-alabama/>), the major inland transportation route from Texas refineries to points east.

To be clear, biofuel production is not risk-free. However, the next-generation approach to biofuel is a regional one that draws from a wide variety of regional sources and sells to local markets. This more flexible model could help reduce the nation's reliance on centralized fuel hubs located in high risk coastal areas.

Texas refineries still in recovery mode

As for whether or not there will be any lessons learned, AP points out that the Harvey-related tank failures were predictable and preventable:

The tank failures follow years of warnings that the Houston area's petrochemical industry was ill-prepared for a major storm, with about one-third of the 4,500 storage tanks along the Houston Ship Channel located in areas susceptible to flooding, according to researchers.

Two weeks after Harvey hit, the Texas refining industry (<http://money.cnn.com/2017/09/11/investing/harvey-refinery-texas-gulf-coast/index.html>) is still suffering the impacts (<http://www.triplepundit.com/2017/08/hurricane-harvey-halts-domestic-oil-gas-production/>).

On Monday, CNN reported:

Five oil refineries remain shuttered as of Monday, according to S&P Global Platts, an energy research firm. Ten more are partially shut down as they attempt to recover from historic flooding.

All told, about 2.4 million barrels of daily refining capacity in Texas is offline because of Harvey, Platts estimates. That is about 13% of the country's total ability to turn oil into gasoline, jet fuel and other products.

CNN attributes the delays to flooding and other damages, power outages, and in some cases "challenges" related to the abrupt shutdowns.

If the environmental and public health issues aren't enough to hammer home the need for more attention to climate change resiliency, perhaps the bottom line concerns will motivate change.

Image (screenshot): Sites potentially affected by Harvey flooding via Union of Concerned Scientists (<http://blog.ucsusa.org/kristy-dahl/flooded-by-hurricane-harvey-new-map-shows-energy-industrial-and-superfund-sites>).

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Tina writes frequently for Triple Pundit and other websites, with a focus on military, government and corporate sustainability, clean tech research and emerging energy technologies. She is a former Deputy Director of Public Affairs of the New York City Department of Environmental Protection, and author of books and articles on recycling and other conservation themes. She is currently Deputy Director of Public Information for the County of Union, New Jersey. Views expressed here are her own and do not necessarily reflect agency policy.

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Galena Park gasoline spill dwarfed other Harvey leaks, but stayed out of public eye for days

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By Collin Eaton and Jordan Blum | September 12, 2017 | Updated: September 12, 2017 8:29pm

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Photo: Magellan Midstream Partners

The massive BridgeTex Pipeline was completed in 2014 and terminates in east Houston. The pipeline - owned by Magellan Midstream and Plains All American Pipeline - carries Permian Basin crude oil from Colorado City to Houston. The pipeline was expanded to 400,000 barrels a day of capacity this year and the owners are currently weighing an additional expansion to 440,000 barrels daily.

Jesse Perez, 41, a longtime resident of Galena Park, said he had grown accustomed to the smells of refineries and other plants in this heavily industrial community on the east side of Houston. But in that days that followed Hurricane Harvey's departure from the area, he said he never smelled such strong gasoline odors in his neighborhood.

"It was a heavy smell, and it even carried inside our house," Perez said. "We had to put air fragrances in the rooms just to air out the house."

Perez was among the Galena Park residents who complained of the strong odors and burning eyes for days, unsure of the cause. It was only after news reports of a spill of nearly a half-million gallons of gasoline that residents suspected the cause of their discomfort. So little information was released by state and federal regulators that Perez feared the smell was coming from the Arkema chemical plant fires in Crosby, which were too far away.

Federal and state agencies took almost two weeks to publicly acknowledge the extent of the spill that had occurred in a storage tank complex operated by Oklahoma pipeline company Magellan Midstream Partners. Magellan employees notified the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Coast Guard, the Railroad Commission of Texas and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, but the only public record were entries in databases available on the internet.

Both the Railroad Commission and Commission on Environmental Quality said they were aware of the spill, but did not publicize it. The Railroad Commission said it did not include the Galena Park release on its list of spills attributed to Hurricane Harvey because it was within the jurisdiction of other agencies.

The Galena Park spill was more than five times as big as all the other reported spills in Texas combined.





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The Commission on Environmental Quality said it helped handled the spill alongside the Coast Guard, the Texas General Land Office and the EPA.

On Tuesday, the EPA released a statement on the spill, saying the vast majority of the leaked gasoline never escaped secondary containment booms and into nearby waterways, though some fuel seeped into the Houston Ship Channel. The cleanup operation, in which Magellan spread a blanket of foam over the gasoline to curb its volatile emissions, recovered about 8,000 of the nearly 11,000 barrels spilled, with a "significant" amount of the fuel likely evaporating, authorities said.

The EPA said it doesn't expect the spill to have adverse environmental or health effects.

In the days after Harvey's record rains, Texas energy companies reported a slurry of crude oil, wastewater and gasoline spilled from massive storage tanks across the state's oil patches and its seaside refining complex. About 100 miles west of Houston, several huge steel tanks owned by one oil company sprung free from their piping and toppled over, tearing flowlines and spewing 1,117 barrels of crude and wastewater at eight different well sites in Fayette County.

But even EnerVest Operating's series of spills, which made up more than half of the estimated 1,930 barrels of leaked oil and wastewater in 23 separate spills reported to the Texas Railroad Commission, was only a fraction of the Galena Park spill.

"Those add up to a lot, but nothing comes close to this one," said Luke Metzger, director

TRANSLATOR

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BUSINESS

of Environment Texas in Austin, referring to Magellan's spill.



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Galena Park gasoline spill dwarfed other Harvey leaks, but stayed



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Around 11:30 p.m., the night that Hurricane Harvey left Houston on an eastward arc toward Port Arthur, Magellan employees discovered gasoline seeping from two massive fuel tanks.

The Motley Fool: Time to freak out?



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The workers called 911, evacuated upwind and reported the spill to federal and state regulatory agencies, still unsure of its size. The spill was originally estimated as a leak of about 1,000 barrels, but that was revised to more than 10 times that amount on Sept. 5 after Magellan fully assessed the leak and the equipment.

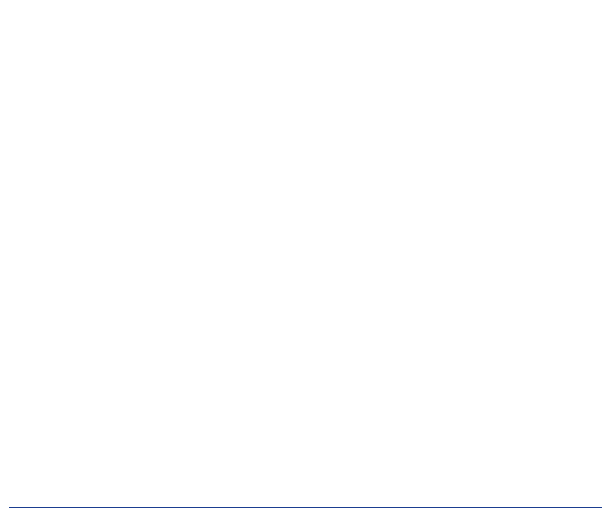
Magellan spokesman Bruce Heine said the company initially gave a conservative estimate of the leaked volume, but that the "unprecedented flood water" from Harvey hindered Magellan's access to the equipment and the true volume of the spill. Magellan actually thought it had overestimated the volume because only a "relatively small visible sheen" was seen on the contained water, Heine said.

The gasoline spill started from two above-ground storage tanks and, while Harvey's flood waters are the culprit, "the specific cause of the tank release is under investigation at this time," Heine said.

Metzger said he understands the delays in reporting the larger volume of the spill because of the floodwaters, but that it's still important for the industry to get the news out as quickly as possible to the public to ensure they're protected and informed.

News of the spill did not surface until six days after it was largely cleaned up, and the EPA did not craft a public statement on the spill until Tuesday, after the Associated Press broke the news about the spill on Monday.

Juan Flores, a lifelong Galena Park resident and former city councilman, said he and many other locals detected a strong petroleum smell -- which he described as an "extreme stench" -- for several days in Harvey's aftermath. People complained about the smell, burning eyes and more.



Flores, who does outreach with the nonprofit group Air Alliance Houston, said people didn't know where it was coming from for days until the news reports. They were closing doors and windows, but many still couldn't escape the odor, he said.

"Smells are a part of living in GP, but this time it was real, real bad," Flores said. "It's part of life but, at the same time, it's our kids who are suffering."

David Hunn contributed to this article.



Collin Eaton

Business Reporter,
Houston Chronicle

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QUARTZ

BUG WARS

Swarmed with mosquitoes after Harvey, Texas calls in the US Air Force

Zoë Schlanger | 4 hours ago

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today's [Daily Brief](#).

📷 US Air Force C-130s will be spraying 6 million acres in Texas for mosquitoes (US Air Force photo/Senior Airman Dennis Sloan)

In an effort to combat the swarms of mosquitoes apparently making mating grounds out of the standing water left behind from Hurricane Harvey, Texas has called in the big planes. The state asked the US Air Force to spray 6 million acres in the state with insecticide from its low-flying C-130 cargo planes. The Air Force has [long used its planes](#) in mosquito-control missions.

The work began this weekend, with three counties sprayed so far, according to [Reuters](#). The hope is that the spraying will prevent mosquito-borne disease (though most mosquitoes that arrive after flooding don't carry disease, according to a [Texas health official](#)), and prevent emergency response slowdowns by workers inundated by biting insects.

Low Level C-130 Spraying Mosquitoes

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The Air Force is using naled, which is in the organophosphate category of insecticides, and though widely used in the US, is banned in the EU. The EU [decided to ban naled](#) in 2012 out of concern for human health. “The scenarios evaluated in the human health risk assessment as well as in the environmental risk assessment showed a potential and unacceptable risk,” the European Commission [wrote in its decision](#).

American health officials disagree. Both the Centers for Disease Control and the US Environmental Protection Agency stand behind naled, [saying](#) the small amount of the insecticide sprayed from planes doesn’t expose people enough to pose a health concern.

An Air Force spokesperson reiterated that position in a [news release](#), saying the insecticide will be used in volumes the EPA considers safe. “The system disperses droplets small enough to land on a mosquito’s wing, using less than one ounce of naled per acre. That’s less than one shot glass for an area the size of a football field,” the spokesperson said.

Naled is already everywhere in the US—health departments spray roughly [16 million acres](#) in the country with the insecticide each year. It’s also often used after disasters like hurricanes and flooding to curb mosquitoes.

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The chemical has caused controversy in recent years. In 2016, naled spraying inadvertently caused [millions of honeybee deaths](#) in South Carolina, and Florida health officials' decision to spray naled in Miami Beach [caused protest](#) among residents. (Spraying there has [continued](#).) When the CDC send a shipment of naled to Puerto Rico to combat Zika, Puerto Rican governor Alejandro García Padilla [sent it back](#), according to the Guardian.

Naled works as a neurotoxin, killing mosquitoes by [interfering with an enzyme](#) essential to the nervous systems of both insects and humans. Research on whether it poses a threat to human nervous systems at the levels used to kill mosquitoes is limited. A 2016 [study from the University of Michigan](#) looked at babies living in China; [they found](#) that the babies most exposed to naled while in the womb scored 3% to 4% lower on fine motor skill tests than their less-exposed peers by the time they were nine months old.

Another [study](#) looked at Mexican-American children living in agricultural regions in California, where organophosphates like naled are used regularly—children there had higher rates of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder.

But when [Mother Jones](#) spoke to [Dana Barr](#), one of the authors of the study on Mexican-American children, she mostly agreed that aerial spraying doesn't pose as significant a threat. "Likely the small amount sprayed won't pose significant risk," she [told the magazine](#), but said people who live in sprayed areas should "consider their exposures from other sources as well," like from non-organic food and gardening insecticide. She also said women who are pregnant and infants should "take precautions to stay inside during spraying," since they'd be most sensitive to any negative affects.

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DAILY COMMENT

WILL REBUILDING AFTER HARVEY AND IRMA MAKE MORE FLOODING INEVITABLE?

By Elizabeth Kolbert 5:00 A.M.



Kenny Crippen looks at the debris outside his home on Plantation Island, Florida, where he rode out Hurricane Irma.

Photograph by David Goldman / AP

The aim of the National Flood Insurance Program, which was created by Congress, in 1968, in the aftermath of Hurricane Betsy, is to provide “affordable insurance to property owners.” The program offers what amounts to subsidized coverage, and according to its critics, and also to some of its supporters, the N.F.I.P. has

had the perverse effect of encouraging rebuilding in areas where homes and businesses probably shouldn't have been built in the first place.

Many homes enrolled in the program have been flooded and repaired more than once. These are known as "repetitive-loss properties." Then there are homes that have been flooded and repaired at least four times. These are known as "severe repetitive-loss properties." Into this latter category falls a Mississippi house valued at sixty-nine thousand dollars. The house has flooded thirty-four times, resulting in a total of six hundred and sixty-three thousand dollars in claims.

"It's basically lather, rinse, repeat," Steve Ellis, the vice-president of the non-partisan group Taxpayers for Common Sense, recently told Politico.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the National Flood Insurance Program, which was supposed to pay for itself, is deeply in debt; it owes nearly twenty-five billion dollars to the federal government. Authorization for the program was set to expire on September 30th, but then, last Friday, with Houston still flooded from Hurricane Harvey and Florida bracing for Irma, President Trump signed a bill extending the authorization for three months.

Figuring out how to fix the N.F.I.P. is a real and urgent task. (In 2012, Congress approved a measure that was supposed to raise N.F.I.P. premiums, to better reflect the actuarial risk of the policies; then, in 2014, lawmakers reversed themselves, approving a second measure that effectively countermanded the first.) It might also be seen as a metaphor. The response to a disaster can reduce the damage from future calamities, or it can exacerbate it. As Houston and the battered cities of Florida start to look toward rebuilding, obviously decisions *ought* to be made with an eye toward reducing future risks. But, given who's running the country and the states most affected, it's hard to imagine they will be.

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Consider the situation in Florida. In many parts of the state, owing to climate change and the accompanying sea-level rise, rain is no longer a prerequisite for flooding. All that's needed is an unusually high tide. Floridians call this "sunny-day flooding." A study published in 2016 in the journal *Ocean & Coastal Management* found that in Miami Beach the frequency of such flooding had increased by a remarkable four hundred per cent over the previous ten years.

Scientists studying this phenomenon have exhorted Florida's Republican governor, Rick Scott, to acknowledge the problem and try to figure out how to deal with it. Instead, Scott has prohibited state officials from even talking about climate change.

"It's more than an absence of leadership," Eric Buermann, the former board chairman for the Southwest Florida Water Management District, who is also the former general counsel to the state's Republican Party, told the *Washington Post* last week. "There's harm being done by denying the problem."

(As it happens, much of Irma's destruction was caused by wind, rather than by flooding, but here again government policy may have put more people at risk. In Florida, after Hurricane Andrew, which struck in 1992, it became so difficult to get insurance against wind damage that the state formed its own insurance company and offered incentives to induce private companies to enter the market. Now no one is sure whether those private companies will be able to pay out.)

America is, of course, currently a nation run by deniers. Trump is the denier-in-chief, and he has appointed deniers of various stripes to virtually all key positions. These include Ryan Zinke as Secretary of the Interior, Rick Perry as Secretary of Energy, and Scott Pruitt as the head of the Environmental Protection Agency. Just last week, the President nominated another climate denier, Representative Jim Bridenstine, a Republican of Oklahoma, to run NASA.

Climate change clearly exacerbated the damage of both Harvey and Irma, if for no other reason than the fact that higher sea levels produce higher storm surges. (In addition, hurricanes draw their energy from the warm surface waters of the oceans; as sea surface temperatures rise, storms are expected to become more ferocious, and, since higher temperatures also produce evaporation, storms will drop more rain.) But last week, as Irma bore down on Florida, Pruitt told CNN, “To have any kind of focus on the cause and effect of the storm versus helping people, or actually facing the effect of the storm, is misplaced.” This prompted the Republican mayor of Miami, Tomás Regalado, to respond that this was, in fact, exactly “the time that the president and the E.P.A. and whoever makes decisions needs to talk about climate change.”

“If this isn’t climate change, I don’t know what is,” Regalado told the *Miami Herald*. “This is a truly, truly poster child for what is to come.”

Which brings us back to the National Flood Insurance Program. Even before Harvey and Irma, Texas and Florida were among the states with the most frequently flooded properties. (The others are Louisiana and New York.) One of the reasons that the N.F.I.P. is in so much trouble is that most of its flood maps don’t account for climate change and hence are out of date.

Writing about the program on Monday in the *Washington Post*, Logan Strother, a visiting scholar at Princeton, noted that the N.F.I.P. could be redesigned “to discourage people and businesses from living and building in flood areas—and to help with the costs for those who are flooded nevertheless.” But he doubted whether this would actually happen. Congress isn’t keen on making the needed changes, and state and local officials, and also homeowners and developers, are usually more interested in trying to preserve the status quo—even as it disappears under the waves.

After disasters, Strother lamented, “people rebuild right back in these areas, making the next major loss inevitable.”



Elizabeth Kolbert has been a staff writer at The New Yorker since 1999. She won the 2015 Pulitzer Prize for general nonfiction for “The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History.” [Read more »](#)

Video

Hurricane Harvey Strikes Hard
Scenes from Texas in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey—the first Category 4 storm to hit the U.S. mainland in more than ten years.

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Iowa corn growers see benefits of lifted ethanol restrictions after Hurricane Harvey



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By Alicia Tarancon, KCRG-TV9 | Posted: Wed 8:27 AM, Sep 13, 2017 | Updated: Wed 8:27 AM, Sep 13, 2017

VINTON, Iowa (KCRG-TV9) -- After Hurricane Harvey, consumers saw gas prices rise in Iowa and around the country.



This is the trend from GasBuddy.com., where the red line shows the spike in Iowa gas prices, compared to the national trend in blue.

The hurricane shut down oil and gas refineries so the EPA lifted certain restrictions on ethanol fuels to help after the storm.

And now Iowa corn growers are seeing a slight boost in ethanol sales.

Many gas stations have an e-10 or e-15 fuel options and farmers say higher ethanol blended gas tends to be a little cheaper.

In Iowa, there's an abundant amount of corn which means a large supply of ethanol can be used as an alternative fuel source here in the state.

After Hurricane Harvey, prices on premium and regular gas started to rise so the Renewable Fuels Association, which represents the ethanol industry began pushing the EPA to lift their restrictions on a mid-level ethanol blend of e-15.

Farmers say ethanol is actually a cleaner burning fuel, there are less carbon and less carbon footprint, less greenhouse gas let out into the environment. ☒

Some of the myths about higher carbon foot print because of the production of ethanol, the farming practices have changed so much in the last 20 or 30 years that most of that is just a myth and we can actually document that it's a far cleaner fuel," says Jim Grief, a farmer with the Iowa Corn Growers Association.

The majority of gasoline contains ethanol, but Grief tells says the e-15 blend is for vehicles that are a 2001 or newer.

As for the current gas prices, Iowans are paying an average of just under \$2.50 for a gallon of regular gas.

The average across the U.S. is about \$2.64.

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PAUL HARGRAVE

01:22 / 02:25

CBS NEWS / September 12, 2017, 8:07 PM

Weeks after Harvey, floodwaters still pose threats to Houston residents

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HOUSTON -- Nearly three weeks after Harvey drowned Houston, people like Mike Gregg are still digging through the debris, and realizing just how much they lost.

Two feet of water soaked everything, including the family piano.

"It was my wife's," Gregg said. "Something that was very valuable to her."



Hurricane Harvey

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Weeks after Harvey, floodwaters still pose threats to Houston residents



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Woman uses "extreme couponing" to help hurricane victims

news correspondent Omar Villanueva. Along with exposure to mold, toxins are floating around, too.

Tests of floodwaters conducted by Baylor College of Medicine and Rice University show some neighborhoods are contaminated with lead and arsenic, as well as bacteria like E. coli, which was found in one area at levels 135 times what's considered safe.



Dr. Winifred Hamilton / CBS NEWS

Baylor College's Dr. Winifred Hamilton, who helped lead the research, said the issue was worse inside homes.

"We're seeing bacteria levels that are roughly 20 times, sometimes 30 times, higher than what we're seeing right outside the same place," Hamilton said.

"Is it going to get worse?" Villafranca

asked.

"Yes, I think so," she replied.

There are also 43 toxic Superfund sites around Houston, and the EPA said two need further evaluation, including one half a mile from Greg Moss's home. He's worried about any runoff from there.



Greg Moss / CBS NEWS

"And what would that do to your property?" Villafranca asked.

"It's gonna poison it some more," Moss said.

Another concern are the mosquitoes that breed in stagnant pools of water and carry diseases like Zika and West Nile. Spraying has begun in some neighborhoods, but because there's still flooding

in others the spray trucks can't get to. They'll have to do that decontamination by air.



confronted by reporter during Irma

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By Sandra Cowherd ([/authors/108-sandra-cowherd](#))

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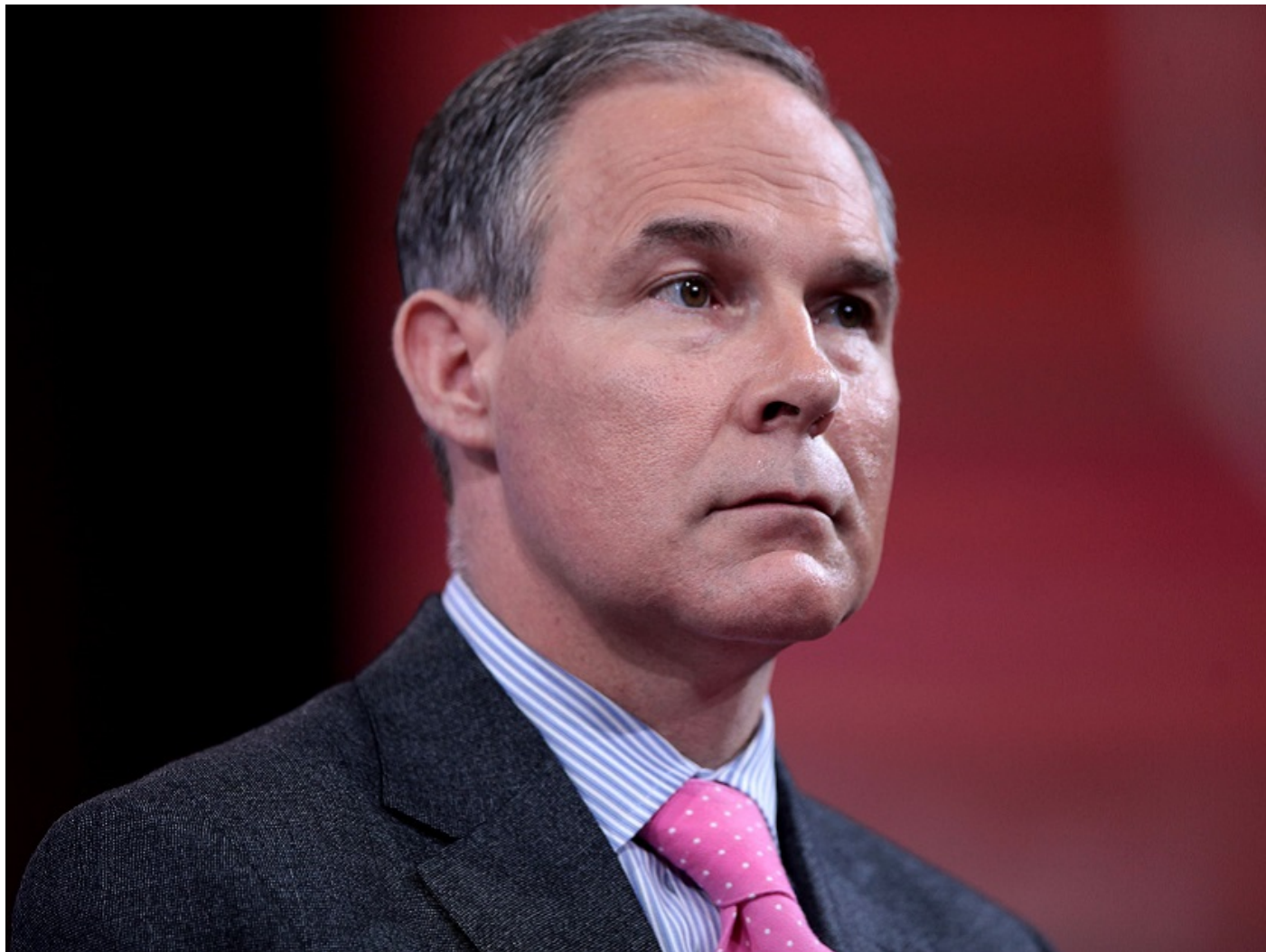
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WASHINGTON, September 13, 2017 - As a result of the continuing impacts on refineries near the Gulf Coast and disruption to the fuel distribution system caused by Hurricanes Harvey and Irma, Environmental Protection Agency (<https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-approves-emergency-fuel-waivers-38-states-and-washington-dc-1>) Administrator Scott Pruitt exercised EPA's emergency fuel waiver authority to help ensure an adequate supply of fuel throughout the country.

EPA waived requirements for reformulated gasoline through September 26 and low volatility conventional gasoline through Sept. 15 in 38 states and the District of Columbia. The waiver supersedes the waiver issued on Aug. 31.

It also waives requirements for low volatility gasoline in El Paso County, Texas, through Sept. 16 and to a number of counties in Eastern Texas through Sept. 26. An EPA release said Pruitt used waiver authority granted under the Clean Air Act in coordination with the Energy Secretary Rick Perry.

As required by law, EPA and the Department of Energy (DOE) evaluated the situation and determined that granting a short-term waiver was consistent with the public interest. Both departments say they are continuing to actively monitor the fuel supply situation as a result of the hurricanes and will act expeditiously if extreme and unusual supply circumstances exist in other areas.

The sale of gasoline containing up to 15 percent ethanol (E15) must continue to comply with federal rules, which prohibit the sale of certain ethanol blends until after Sept. 15.

To mitigate any impacts on air quality, the Clean Air Act provides strict criteria for when fuel waivers may be granted, and requires that waivers be limited as much as possible in terms of their geographic scope and duration.

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Sandra Cowherd

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Terminals, refiners clean up spills after Harvey

12 Sep 2017, 9.38 pm GMT

Washington, 12 September (Argus) — Refineries and terminal operators around Houston have reported spilling thousands of gallons of diesel and gasoline in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey.

Magellan Midstream Partners says hurricane-related flooding caused the spill of 10,988 bl of gasoline from two storage tanks at its Galena Park facility, which is located next to the Houston Ship Channel. Some of the spilled gasoline flowed into a ditch near the channel and a "small amount" reached the water, the company says.

Magellan says its staff and environmental experts have contained and recovered the fuel, but it is still in the process of removing and replacing affected soil. State and federal officials have been on-site during recovery and clean-up operations, the company said, and the cause of the gasoline release is still under investigation.

Kinder Morgan says it reported a release of 500 bl of gasoline from its Pasadena terminal, which is adjacent to the Buffalo Bayou waterway. The gasoline was covered with foam to control air emissions and contained on-site. The spill has been "fully remediated" and regulators were notified, Kinder Morgan says.

ExxonMobil says it reported a spill of diesel at its 557,000 b/d refinery in Baytown, Texas, in the facility's storage tank containment area. The company did not respond to questions about how much diesel was spilled, but it says the leak ended and spilled material was recovered.

Valero reported a spill at its 160,000 b/d refinery in Houston, while Motiva reported a spill at its 600,000 b/d refinery in Port Arthur, Texas, according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The companies did not respond for comment about the size of the spill or whether they have been contained.

EPA said so far it has responded to 12 physical facilities that have reported spills in the Houston area. The agency said it was working with affected facilities to ensure "appropriate cleanup actions take place."

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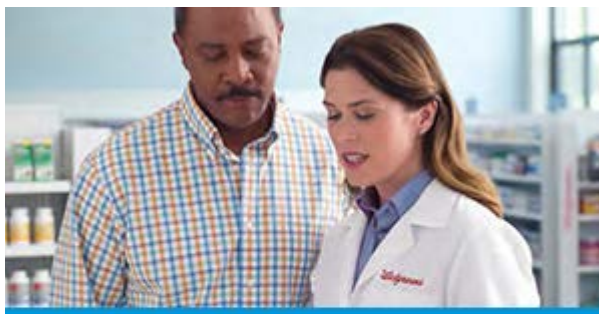
Analysis Estimates 4.6 Million Pounds Of Chemicals Spilled During Hurricane Harvey

Analysis Estimates 4.6 Mill...

by Video Elephan⁺



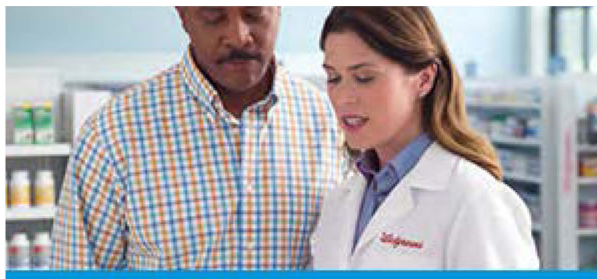
Flooding from Hurricane Harvey overwhelmed existing safety precautions at many chemical plants. According to Business Insider, the floods released 4.6 million pounds of chemicals overall--some carcinogenic. Advocates have expressed concern about potential health effects, but federal and state representatives said there is little reason for alarm. The EPA is working with Texas state regulators to clean up spills from a dozen industrial facilities. However, representatives say it's still too early to estimate the amounts spilled. Media: Wochlt Media



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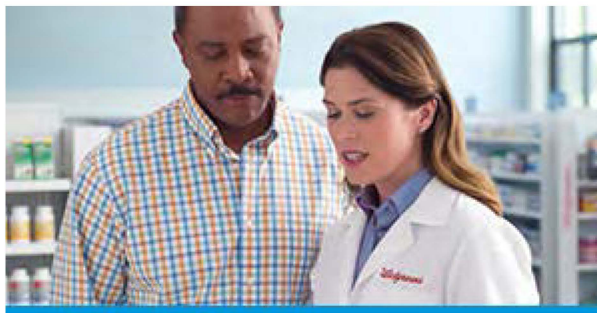
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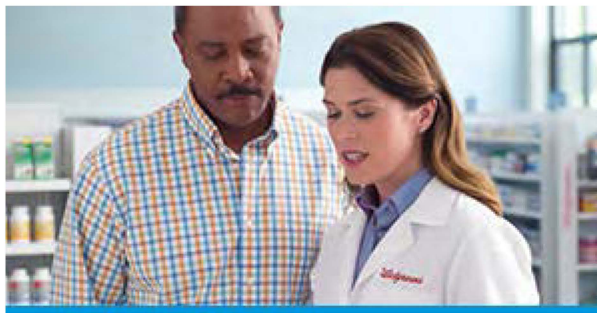
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In this photo combination, evacuees waded down Tidwell Road in Houston on Aug. 28, 2017, top, as floodwaters from Tropical Storm Harvey rise, and a car drives down the same road on Sept. 5, bottom, after the water receded.

// David J. Phillip/AP

Zoned for Displacement

BRENTIN MOCK 8:09 AM ET

Hilton Kelley has been sounding off on Facebook Live the past few days about families who evacuated their homes to escape Hurricane Harvey and are now getting eviction notices. The families live in Port Arthur, Texas, the small Gulf Coast city about 90 miles east of Houston, but are currently scattered across Louisiana and Texas. Kelley himself had to evacuate—his fourth time doing so in the last 15 years due to hurricane flooding—but was able to make it back to his home last week. He’s now trying to locate as many dispersed families as possible via social media to find out who hasn’t come back and why. That’s when he found out about the eviction notices.

Louis Manor Apartments

1300 Joe Louis Ave.
Port Arthur, Texas 77640
Telephone: (409) 982-6313
TTY: (800) 735-2989 or Nationwide: 711

September 7, 2017

To:

Unit# 501

From: Genelle Scott, Property Manager
Louis Manor Apartments

SUBJECT: Notice to Vacate
Unit Uninhabitable

Louis Manor Apartments has sustained significant damage due to Hurricane Harvey. We have been given an assessment by our insurance company and construction must begin immediately.

The damage to your unit is so extensive that the unit has to be vacated for required repairs to be done. It is mandatory that you vacate your unit by Monday, September 11, 2017. You will need to remove all of your personal belongings from the unit. If you have not vacated your unit by September 11, 2017, Management will take the necessary steps to terminate your lease and dispose of your belongings so that repairs may begin. If you have not done so, please contact FEMA @ (800) 621-3362/TTY (800) 462-7585 and register for Housing Assistance.

Necessary Steps to Take:

- > Make alternate living arrangements through FEMA and/or a local assistance agency.
- > Provide the Rental Office with your alternate address or phone number where you can be contacted or a message left for you. HUD also requires that you inform Management on the type of alternate housing you will be moving to such as family, friends, temporary housing or long term temporary housing. Moreover, if you are not going to be able to remain at any temporary housing for the duration of the repairs, please also inform Management of this as well.
- > Update the Rental Office on any changes concerning your living arrangements and/or address and phone number.
- > To conform with HUD guidelines, you will need to notify the Rental Office in writing if you do NOT intend to return to your unit.
- > Louis Manor Apartments will allow you first refusal of the unit once repairs are complete.
- > Notices will be sent in writing to at least 60 days prior to the expected date that your unit will be ready to re-occupy.
- > Within 30 days of the notice, a response must be made in writing to inform the Rental Office of your intention to return to your unit or not.
- > If you do not respond within 30 days of the notice, Management will consider the offer to return to the unit refused.

If you have any questions concerning this notice, please contact the Rental Office during normal business hours.

Thank you
Genelle Scott
Property Manager

Beil & Beil Properties: Please be advised that persons with disabilities have a right to request a reasonable accommodation to participate in any informal or formal hearing process. Interested parties are also advised that the owner does not discriminate against persons with disabilities and that the following person serves as the property's Section 504 Coordinator: Independent Managing Agent; 2001 South Staples; Corpus Christi, Texas 78404; (361) 854-0963; TTY (800) 735-2989 or Nationwide: 711.



(Hilton Kelley)

Those kinds of blindsiding evictions are a rootshock that many renter families in New Orleans know too well, as the same happened for Hurricane Katrina. Plenty of New Orleanians didn't even get a notice—instead they found out via TV that they would not be able to return to their homes. This certainly was true for tenants of the city's "Big Four" public housing projects, which were closed for good during Katrina even though many of them collected no floodwaters.

This is the kind of displacement that Kelley fights to help families avoid, through his nonprofit Community In-Power and Development Association (CIDA), which advocates on behalf of families living under the constant threat of environmental disasters.

That doesn't just mean flooding and hurricanes. Port Arthur is saturated with oil refineries and petrochemical plants, many of them located within yards of homes, schools, and playgrounds. The Carver Terrace public housing projects in Port Arthur were completely surrounded by these poisonous industries before they were torn down just last year, which Kelley had been petitioning the federal government to do for years. All of Carver Terrace's tenants were relocated, to finally remove them from the clouds of air pollution molesting their lungs and nostrils every day.

That kind of displacement was necessary—requested, even, from the tenants themselves. The involuntary kind of displacement, however, that's becoming a more frequent event in Port Arthur due to heavier and harsher storms, is getting harder for Kelley to weather. He contemplated for a moment not returning to his home and restaurant that he runs after his most recent evacuation from Harvey. He changed his mind only after considering what he'd lose and how difficult it would be starting over in another city.

"There are sharks out there waiting for us to let loose what we have here and swoop in as we migrate out," says Kelley. "Industries will just engulf this land and then we've lost what we've owned. I own property here. When I leave here, I don't own anything in Dallas, or Colorado, or New York. And I can't imagine trying to buy a restaurant or a home there in this present situation."

Displacement like this is increasingly becoming inevitable for people of color, not just because of climate change and extreme weather events, but because of discriminatory policies that push them into unlivable conditions. It's a reality that is rarely confronted when it comes time to map out where people can and can't rebuild. But ignoring it likely means that policies for rebuilding will suffer from the same disparities that have predated recent storm recoveries by several decades.

The problem of displacement is even more pronounced for Latinos. At the same time that Harvey was devastating the land, Trump decided to recall DACA, which put thousands of immigrant children at even greater risk. If Congress approves Trump's request, then those children will face the kind of relocation that doesn't just send them to another city, but rather, to a detention center, and then to another country that they, in many cases, have no real connection to, if they grew up in the U.S.

Bryan Parras, an organizer with Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services (t.e.j.a.s), is working a lot these days with Latino families who are bracing for recovery from both Harvey and Trump's restrictive immigration policies. Displacement is a threat that always lurks around Latino communities, and their options for sanctuary are growing more limited, especially as new storms keep gathering in the Gulf.

"That's what disaster does—it really destroys the fabric of a community and that's even deeper destruction, because it's psychological, it's spiritual, it's cultural," says Parras. "Even if they stay, that place is different. It's been traumatized, so staying doesn't guarantee that you'll be able to maintain those cultural ties to your neighbors."

'There is no true security'

An equitable recovery will be especially difficult in Houston given that the city doesn't believe in zoning. It's because of that absence of zoning restrictions that pollution is concentrated in the east side of the city, all the way down the Shipping Channel to Port Arthur, along which lives the heaviest concentration of Latino and African-American families. This is also where the heaviest concentration of petrochemical facilities, toxic Superfund sites, overflowing sewers, garbage incinerators, and landfills are located.

"This no-zoning policy has allowed for a somewhat erratic land-use pattern in the city," wrote environmental justice scholars Robert Bullard and Beverly Wright in their 2012 book, *The Wrong Complexion for Protection: How the Government Response to Disaster Endangers African American Communities*. "Houston's black neighborhoods were unofficially 'zoned' for garbage."

And now that hash of toxic chemicals and trash are spilled across those same neighborhoods in Houston, where black and Latino families have fewer resources for recovery. Public health officials are telling people not to touch the floodwaters, particularly in those places where volatile, flammable, and poisonous chemicals have spilled.

These problems were avoidable. Environmental justice advocates had been petitioning the federal government for years to update the chemical disaster rule in EPA's risk management program, to better protect families living on the fenceline of these refineries and chemical plants. Obama issued an executive order in 2016 requesting the EPA to begin making these risk management program adjustments. However, one of the first orders of business for Trump when he took the White House this year was to delay those updates.

Nine months later, families' homes are surrounded by a toxic stew created from the discharges of oil refineries, overflowing sewers, and exploding chemical plants. We've not yet seen the toxicology report to see what kind of short- and long-term effects these spills and explosions will have on people's health. Meanwhile, the 29th congressional district that includes these communities has been known for a long time as the district with the least number of people with health insurance in the state with the least number of uninsured people.

Not only that, but these families are also living in cities where the infrastructure for stormwater and flood management is aged and in disrepair. This only deepens the racial disparities at play when it comes to exposure to environmental risks and the increased likelihood of displacement. New Orleans is a prime example of this—flooding was caused by the levees that burst during Katrina twelve years ago, and the city suffered massive flooding again just last month despite the multi-billion dollar reconstruction of those levees. African Americans in the city have the hardest time recovering their homes and communities.

“There is no true security — we can, at best, reduce risk, not eliminate it,” says the New Orleans-based geographer Richard Campanella. “Engineering devices (such as levees and floodwalls) enabled this deltaic city to become a modern metropolis. But they also tended to produce a false sense of security. People took for granted that those engineering devices would always work as designed. At least twice in the past twelve years, they didn’t.”

New Orleans’ recent flooding was the culprit of a faulty drainage system — one that was considered the “best in the world” a century ago, according to Mark Davis, director of Tulane University’s Institute on Water Resources Law and Policy. But it was a system that did not keep up with the rapid growth and urbanization of New Orleans in the decades following. Similar was true in Houston for Harvey, where flooding on the west side of the city was the consequence of an inadequate reservoir system that engineers said was badly in need of updating decades ago.

“What we’re seeing in Texas is a reminder that they could easily have had this much rain with no hurricane force winds whatsoever,” says Davis. “It was a slow moving storm with enough low pressure that essentially [water] rises and it makes it hard for the place to drain. We’re really going to have to start thinking in terms of what natural risks we’re running and what reasons we’re running them for and whether we’re being honest with ourselves about what that really means from an investment and justice standpoint.”

Invisible Houston

Bullard, a noted environmental justice activist and scholar, has been talking about these problems since his first book *Invisible Houston*, published 30 years ago this month. The “invisible” part of the city are those black and Latino neighborhoods overlooked or ignored when making decisions about new urban development. These are places where people of color live not because they chose to, but because of racist policies like redlining. Bullard warns that these communities could be rendered invisible again during the Harvey recovery phase.

“When you start talking about how you are going to rebuild and recover, that has to be watched closely because if not it's just going to be a rebuilding on top of inequity,” says Bullard, who today is based in Houston as a professor of urban planning and environmental policy at Texas Southern University. “If we're not careful, those areas might be rebuilt with all kinds of protections, greening them up with more resiliency, but it will push out people who lived in those neighborhoods for a long time—so you get that rebuilding gentrification going on.”

The phenomenon Bullard references is called “climate gentrification” in some corners—and this is a major concern for black communities in south Florida, as Irma takes its destructive path. It seems wrong to give climate change that kind of credit, though. The people of these heaviest-hit communities are vulnerable to displacement because of the injustices they lived with long before any floods and storms. They live in flood-prone communities because of racist policies like redlining that piloted the segregation still seen today.

As Susan Rogers explained in the blog OffCite last year about the Homeowners' Loan Corporation redlining maps of Houston from the 1930s, “the racism is clearly evident” in the areas designated for disinvestment. The maps with the cooler colors (blue, green) were assigned to neighborhoods that the HOLC determined were safe for lending. The warmer colors (yellow, red) were labeled as “declining” or “hazardous” neighborhoods that lenders should avoid. This was one kind of zoning that apparently Houston was willing to live with.

As it happens, neighborhoods with high concentrations of African Americans were painted as not cool for investment. One of the documents culpable in that redlining process was the Federal Housing Administration's "Planning Profitable Neighborhoods," guidance created for homebuilders, primarily for the suburbs. Writes Rogers:

The "Planning Profitable Neighborhoods" bulletin describes and illustrates in a series of drawings "good" and "bad" development practices. Without fail, these drawings define the now-typical suburban models of discontinuous streets, large lots, and strip malls as "good" and traditional urban typologies as "bad." In effect, the combined policies and practices such as "redlining" ensured that central cities, mixed-use areas, and neighborhoods of color would decline.

That decline didn't only come from the denial of lending and investment in those neighborhoods. It also happened because the models recognized in "good" neighborhoods—those "large lots," for example—are what ended up making the city even more prone to flooding. Besides the city's faulty storm water management, Houston also suffers regularly from urban flooding due to the copious levels of parking lots and impervious surfaces paving over the city. So, what was "good" and profitable for sprawl and the suburbs is what also increased the vulnerability of these redlined neighborhoods, making their designation as "hazardous" somewhat of a self-sealing premise.

Pinning displacement or gentrification on climate change only absolves the direct state and city actors who pushed black and Latino families into "hazardous" living conditions to begin with. That history should not be simply paved over in the recovery.

About the Author

Brentin Mock

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Brentin Mock is a staff writer at CityLab. He was previously the justice editor at Grist.



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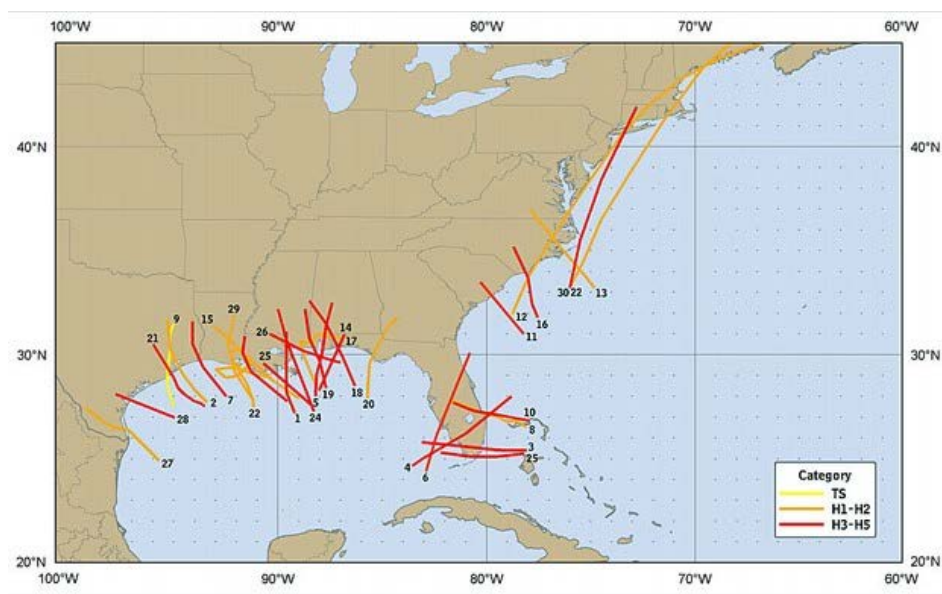
HURRICANE NEWS AND STORM TRACKING

The 10 costliest hurricanes in U.S. history

Posted September 13, 2017 at 06:00 AM | Updated September 13, 2017 at 08:01 AM

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This graphic shows the track of the 30 costliest hurricanes to strike the United States between 1900 and 2010. (Image from National Hurricane Center)

By Drew Broach

The 10 costliest [hurricanes](#) in U.S. history, even when damage estimates are adjusted for inflation, all occurred in the past 30 years. All but two of them struck in the 21st century.

The storms hit **Florida** (6), Louisiana (4) and **Texas** (2), as well as **Alabama**, **Mississippi**, **New Jersey**, **North Carolina** and **South Carolina** (1 each). Most of the big ones struck more than one coastal state.

But it's not just coastal states where costs mount. Once a hurricane comes ashore and weakens, cut off from the warm seawater that fuels it, it still carries immense amounts of moisture. As it moves hundreds of miles inland and breaks up, it continues to dump that moisture in the form of phenomenal rain that floods creeks and rivers, causing even more damage.

We based this report on National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration publications, chiefly:

- **The Deadliest, Costliest and Most Intense United States Tropical Cyclones from 1851 to 2010**
- **Billion-Dollar Weather and Climate Disasters.**

The costs are estimates, to be sure, based in large part on **property insurance** figures and, after 1995, including **flood insurance** figures. We have adjusted the costs to 2017 dollars, based on the **Consumer Price Index**. No monetary estimates are available before 1900.

It will be years before the costs of 2017 hurricanes such as **Harvey** and **Irma** are calculated.

10. Irene, 2011: \$15 billion

Irene landed near Cape Lookout, N.C., on Aug. 27, 2011, as a Category 1 hurricane and damaged property all the way to Canada.

9. Hugo, 1989: \$18.2 billion

Hugo made landfall just north of Charleston, S.C., on Sept. 22, 1989, as a Category 4 hurricane. It recurved northeastward and continued damaging property into southeast Canada for another day.

8. Charley, 2004: \$21.1 billion

Charley accelerated into the southwest coast of Florida on Aug. 13, 2004, making landfall as Category 4 hurricane. The storm crossed central Florida into the Atlantic Ocean, came ashore again near Cape Romain, S.C., as a Category 1 hurricane, moved offshore and made its final landfall at North Myrtle Beach, S.C., before heading over North Carolina and **Virginia**.

7. Rita, 2005: \$23.7 billion

Rita brushed the Florida Keys as Category 2 hurricane on Sept. 20, 2005, intensified to Category 5 in the **Gulf of Mexico** and made landfall as a Category 3 storm in west Louisiana near the Texas border Sept. 24.

6. Wilma, 2005: \$24.3 billion

Wilma made landfall as a Category 3 hurricane on Oct. 23, 2005, near Cape Romano, Fla. It raked the Florida peninsula in less than five hours and headed out to sea.

5. Ivan, 2004: \$27.1 billion

Ivan made landfall as a Category 3 hurricane just west of Gulf Shores, Ala., on Sept. 16, 2004. It weakened as it moved inland, producing over 100 tornadoes and heavy rains across much of the southeastern United States, before merging with a frontal system over the Delmarva Peninsula on Sept. 18.

But an extratropical low pressure remnant of Ivan drifted southward in the western Atlantic for several days, crossed southern Florida and re-entered the Gulf of Mexico on Sept. 21. It became a tropical storm, then weakened into a tropical depression before blowing into southwest Louisiana on Sept. 24.

4. Ike, 2008: \$34.8 billion

Ike came ashore at the north end of Galveston Island, Texas, on Sept. 13, 2008, as a Category 2 hurricane. It weakened as it moved inland across eastern Texas, Arkansas and the Mississippi River Valley but was still gusting with hurricane-force winds into the Ohio River Valley and on to Canada.

3. Andrew, 1992: \$47.8 billion

Andrew blasted Florida on Aug. 24, 1992, making landfall at Homestead as Category 4 hurricane. It moved west in the Gulf of Mexico, curved north and came ashore in Louisiana as a Category 3 hurricane near [**Morgan City**](#).

2. Sandy, 2012: \$70.2 billion

At its strongest, Sandy was a Category 3 hurricane. But it had lost hurricane status by the time it slammed into Brigantine, N.J., on Oct. 29, 2012.

Nonetheless, it wreaked havoc throughout the New York City area. Its effects extended as far west as Wisconsin, and it even caused blizzards in western North Carolina and [**West Virginia**](#).

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First recorded hurricane on Gulf Coast made landfall 300 years ago: report

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Posted on September 12, 2017 at 2:39 PM



Fly over of Hurricane Ivan damage to Dauphin Island, Ala. on Wednesday, Sept. 22, 2004. (Photo by Alex Brandon.)

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By Sara Sneath

NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune

In 1717, a hurricane hit the Gulf Coast, splitting what are now Dauphin Island in Alabama and Petit Bois Island in Mississippi, according to a historian who writes for the Sun Herald. The aftermath of the storm was documented by local residents and in some 18th century maps, which together make up the first recorded accounts of a hurricane making landfall along the Gulf Coast.

The hurricane clogged the Isle Dauphine harbor entrance with sand and forced the French settlement there to move west. In a book not published until 1953, a ship carpenter who lived in the French settlement, Andre Penicaut, wrote that storm surge from the hurricane "drowned a great deal of livestock."

- *Read the [Sun Herald's full account](#).*

.....

*[Sara Sneath](#) covers Louisiana coastal issues for NOLA.com | The Times Picayune.
Reach her at ssneath@nola.com. Follow her on Twitter [@SaraSneath](#).*

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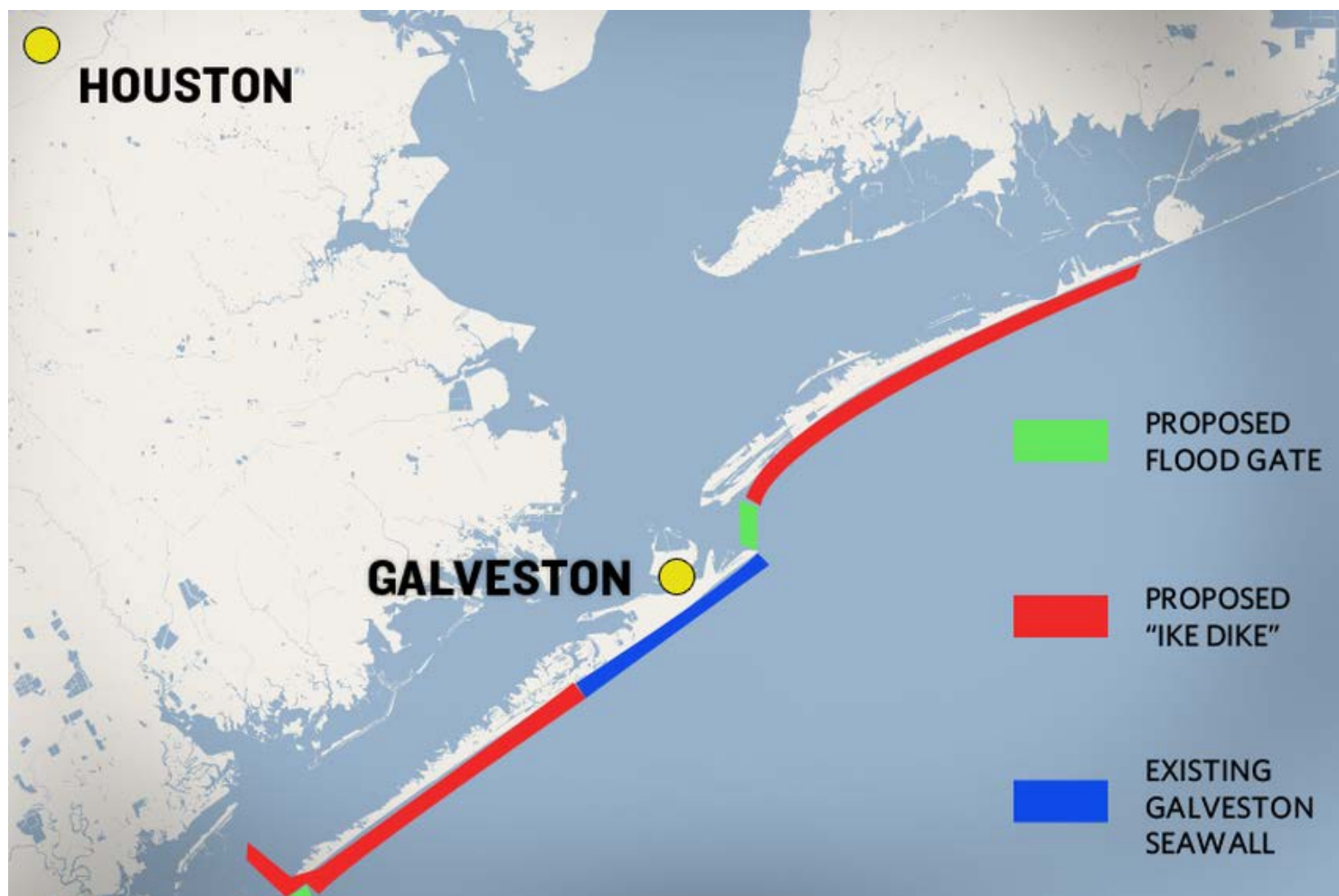
Post-Harvey, Houston officials hope Congress is up for funding Ike Dike

Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner on Tuesday gave his strongest endorsement to date for constructing a physical coastal barrier to protect the region from deadly storm surge.

BY **KIAH COLLIER** AND **NEENA SATIJA** SEPT. 12, 2017 17 HOURS AGO



34



Graphic by Todd Wiseman

HOUSTON — Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner on Tuesday gave his strongest endorsement to date for constructing a physical coastal barrier to protect the region from deadly storm surge during hurricanes.

Though such a barrier system would not have guarded against the unrelenting and unprecedented rain Hurricane Harvey dumped on the area, Turner — one of the region's last leaders to endorse the "coastal spine" concept — said at a Tuesday news conference that he believes it is crucial.

"We cannot talk about rebuilding" from Harvey "if we do not build the coastal spine," he said.

With Harvey — which was downgraded to a tropical storm by the time it reached Houston — "we again dodged the bullet."

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Constructing such a system has been a point of discussion since 2008, when Hurricane Ike shifted course at the last minute, narrowly sparing populated communities like Clear Lake and the Houston Ship Channel — home to the nation's largest refining and petrochemical complex — from a massive storm surge. Scientists have modeled worst-case scenario storms that make clear the potential for devastation, which [The Texas Tribune and ProPublica detailed extensively](#) in a 2016 investigation. They also have urged local, state and federal elected officials to pursue infrastructure solutions, which they expect the federal government to fund.

Last year those scientists and officials told The Texas Tribune and ProPublica that a catastrophic storm likely would have to hit Houston before they could convince Congress to fund such an endeavor — estimated to cost some \$5.8 billion for the Houston area alone and at least \$11 billion for the entire six-county coastal region. Such an ambitious public works project has never been built in anticipation of a natural catastrophe.

Turner and other leaders are clearly hoping Harvey fits the bill.

They have suggested that the federal government could provide funding for a storm surge barrier — often referred to as the "Ike Dike," a proposal first offered up by Texas A&M University at Galveston in 2009 — and a variety of other storm protection measures as part of an overall Harvey relief package.

But the \$15 billion Congress has approved for Texas so far can't be spent on a coastal barrier; the money can only go toward rehabilitating flooded areas. That means local and state officials will either have to depend on Congress to fund something completely separate — a scenario many are doubtful of — or cobble together other funding.

At both the state and federal level, talk of protecting the Houston area from big storms has in recent years been dominated by the coastal barrier concept.

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U.S. Sen. [John Cornyn](#), R-Texas, and Texas Land Commissioner George P. Bush have been leading an effort to secure federal funding for the coastal spine; in April, they and other officials, including [Turner](#), wrote to President Trump urging his support.

But the Ike Dike would only protect coastal areas from catastrophic storm surge; it would do nothing to prevent flooding damage from torrential rain, which is almost entirely responsible for the damage Houstonians suffered from Harvey.

Other flood protection ideas — either underfunded or long-abandoned — have received renewed attention since Harvey.

On Tuesday, Turner joined local officials in expressing support for a [long-delayed reservoir project](#) that experts say would've saved thousands of Houston homes from flooding during Harvey, along with three bayou widening projects estimated to cost a combined \$130 million.

Turner said the city shouldn't have to choose one over the other as it seeks federal funding.

"I don't think we need to pick one," he said. "... We know we need another reservoir. We just need to step up and do that — the same thing with the coastal spine."

A spokeswoman for U.S. Rep. [Michael McCaul](#) said Tuesday that the Austin Republican "has been working with FEMA, Gov. [Greg] Abbott and local officials to identify options for flood mitigation to protect Houston and the surrounding areas from future flood disasters."

McCaul may hold extra clout as chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee. But Adrian Garcia, a former city councilman and Harris County sheriff, said he's not optimistic Texas will get much funding for these projects from Congress beyond the multi-billion dollar short-term aid package.

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"They thought [the Ike Dike] would be the answer to a lot of these problems," Garcia said. "And obviously it is not."

Turner's advocacy for the coastal barrier concept is relatively new.

Early last year, amid the Texas Tribune/ProPublica investigation, Turner declined an interview request to discuss the need for such a barrier. Instead, the city sent statements dismissing the potential impacts — and not indicating whether Turner supported such a project, which dozens of area city councils had enthusiastically endorsed.

"Only a small portion of the city of Houston is in areas at risk for major storm surge," the statement said. "Consequently, hurricane-force wind poses the major threat for the majority of the city."

Reminded of a climate change-driven storm scenario FEMA presented in 2014 — in collaboration with the city — that projected a 34-foot storm surge that put downtown Houston underwater, Turner's office provided a follow-up statement acknowledging that the issue "continues to be a concern." It also placed the onus on the federal government to take the lead on a coastal barrier project.

A few months later, in August 2016, Turner wrote to state leaders studying the coastal barrier concept and said he supported it.

On Tuesday, Turner spoke passionately about the impact Hurricane Ike could have had — and the impact Harvey did have — on the region's industrial complex and the national economy.

"When Hurricane Ike hit in 2008 there were \$30 billion in damages," he said. If Ike's direction hadn't changed "we could have lost refineries, jet fuel and the entire Houston Ship Channel, not only destroying the jobs of many Houstonians, but there would have been an impact on the nation as a whole."

During Harvey, Turner said, "the Houston port did close and business was shut down and the country as a whole was impacted."

"That was a tropical storm," he added. "Can you imagine if Hurricane Harvey had come closer, what the devastating effects would be?"

Disclosure: The General Land Office was a corporate sponsor of The Texas Tribune in 2011. A complete list of Tribune donors and sponsors can be viewed [here](#).

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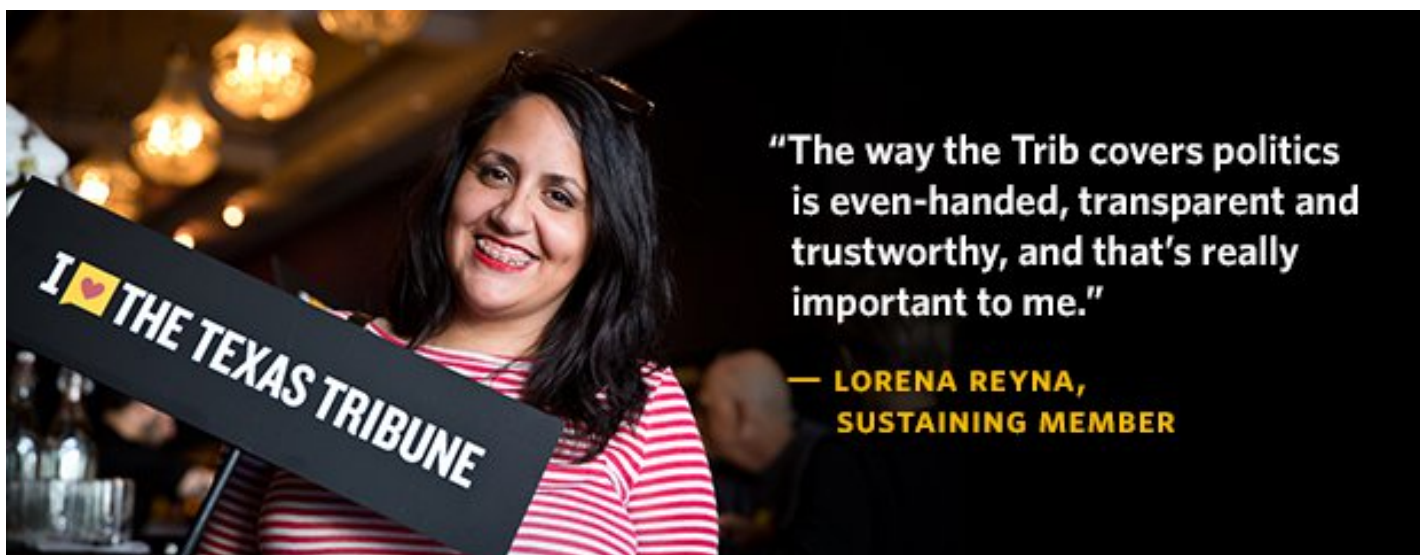
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Harvey, Irma could boost oil glut by 43 million barrels

By Collin Eaton | September 11, 2017 | Updated: September 11, 2017 8:49am

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Photo: Tom Fox, MBR

IMAGE 1 OF 3

FILE - In this Wednesday, Aug. 30, 2017 file photo, large storage tanks situated in retention ponds are surrounded by rainwater left behind by Tropical Storm Harvey at ExxonMobil's refinery in Baytown, Texas. ... [more](#)

The nation's oil stockpile could surge by tens of millions of barrels this month after Hurricane Harvey paralyzed the Gulf Coast refining complex, Goldman Sachs said Monday.

The investment bank believes U.S. oil inventories could end the month 43 million barrels larger in the wake of Harvey and Hurricane Irma, which began pummeling Florida over the weekend.

Domestic oil storage tanks are the world's most visible collection points for the global oil glut that has kept crude prices low for more than three years, and an onrush of oil could send prices lower, analysts said. U.S. oil prices fell 23 cents to \$47.25 a barrel on Monday morning.

HoustonChronicle.com: [Harvey could add to oil glut, depress prices](#)

Goldman estimates global inventories could grow by 600,000 barrels a day to global oil inventories this month, and that Energy Department data will show a record 16 million barrel build in U.S. crude inventories on Wednesday.

That's because Harvey disrupted more than 4 million barrels a day in U.S. refining capacity while oil producers in West Texas, Oklahoma, North Dakota and most of the Gulf of Mexico kept pumping for two weeks.

Adding to the market pressure, Goldman said, U.S. oil demand could drop by 900,000 barrels a day in September, and by 300,000 barrels a day in October.

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Collin Eaton

Business Reporter,
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Harris County Commissioners Approve Funding For New Stormwater Basins

Much of the money will help build new ponds to hold stormwater along Houston-area bayous.

TRAVIS BUBENIK | SEPTEMBER 12, 2017, 6:32 PM



00:02 / 01:05

An example of an already-completed stormwater detention basin along Willow Waterhole in southwest Harris

Harris County Commissioners have approved more than \$1 million to improve flood control.

Much of the money will help build new ponds to hold stormwater along Houston-area bayous. One of them is a more than \$500,000 project in the Inwood Forest area along White Oak Bayou. Another would be built along Little Cypress Creek in Northwestern Harris County, and another Aldine near Greens Bayou is moving forward as well.

Some of those areas had homes destroyed or damaged by Harvey, and while the county flood control district's Karen Hastings says these projects were already in the works before the storm, they're still an important tool for dealing with flooding.

"We can widen and deepen bayous, but stormwater detention basins are equally important, and they're becoming more and more important," she says.

That's because development isn't slowing down. The Little Cypress Creek basin is part of the district's [broader plan](#) to tackle flooding in newer parts of Houston's sprawl.

"Those are areas that are fast-developing, but there's still room to build those kind of projects," she says. "We're not trying to retrofit existing bayous."

As these new projects take a step forward, the district says its immediate focus post-Harvey is on emergency repairs for damaged infrastructure and clearing debris from bayous and creeks.

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Travis Bubenik reports on the tangled intersections of energy and the environment in Houston and across Texas. A Houston native and proud Longhorn, he returned to the Bayou City after serving as the Morning Edition Host & Reporter for Me... Public Radio in Far West Texas. Bubenik was previously the...

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By Alexandra Hart | September 11, 2017 10:34 am

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Despite reduced gasoline production in the areas of Texas affected by Harvey, prices should return to just above \$2 per gallon, by the end of the year.

Matt Smith, director of commodity research at [ClipperData](#), says that while crude oil prices waver, natural gas prices remain unchanged.

What you'll hear in this segment:

^

- What to expect from the energy market in the coming months
- Harvey's effect on natural and crude gas production
- How prices might change through the remainder of 2017

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HARVEY 19 HRS AGO

Tracking Harvey's financial toll: New damage estimate rises to nearly \$200 billion



Paul O'Donnell, Business Editor

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Tracking Harvey's economic toll

Two university researchers who study flood damage are out with a new estimate that would establish Hurricane Harvey as the costliest storm in U.S. history.

Michael Hicks of Ball State University and Mark Burton of the University of Tennessee predict damage to homes, businesses and public infrastructure along the Texas Gulf Coast will end up costing roughly \$198 billion. That exceeds the price tag they put on Hurricane Katrina, which in today's dollars would have totaled \$194 billion.

Here's how Hicks and Burton break down their estimate:

Commercial structure damage: \$26.6 billion

Commercial equipment damage: \$46 billion

Residential structure damage: \$77.2 billion

Residential contents damage: \$36.8 billion

Lost commercial revenue: \$5.8 billion

Electric utilities damage: \$348 million

Highway damage: \$3.8 billion

Sewer system damage: \$1.9 billion

Their research tops Accuweather's \$190 billion price tag, which had been an outlier in predicting Harvey would surpass Katrina in cost. Katrina stands as the most expensive natural disaster in U.S. history, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

On Monday, as Hurricane Irma began to weaken after cutting a destructive swath across Florida and the Caribbean, Moody's Analytics said the combined cost of the back-to-back hurricanes would total \$150 billion to \$200 billion. It put Harvey's toll at \$86 billion to \$108 billion.

Houston's post-Harvey
either'

ches of rain won't

What inflates the university researchers' estimate is the inclusion of public infrastructure damage, a cost they said is often ignored.

Hicks and Burton, director of transportation economics at Tennessee's Center for Transportation Research, drew on their research of other weather disasters, including devastating flooding along the Mississippi River and in Pakistan.

"We would expect the impact ... to include a short-term spike in jobless claims and unemployment, concentrated around Houston and in industries affected by supply disturbances," said Hicks, director of Ball State's Center for Business and Economics Research.

The Labor Department reported last week that initial jobless claims shot up 62,000 in the week following the storm. It was the highest level in more than two years for new applications for unemployment benefits.

[Tracking Harvey's toll: 'This is the costliest and worst natural disaster in American history'](#)

The researchers also see Harvey's financial toll dragging on the nation's third-quarter economic growth by as much as 0.25 percent, though they expect that to be offset by increasing labor demand and resumption of production by the end of 2018's first quarter.



In an interview Tuesday morning on CNBC, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin acknowledged the impact of Harvey and Irma:

"I would say there clearly is going to be an impact on GDP in the short run," Mnuchin said. "We will make it up in the long run as we rebuild. That will help GDP. So I think it's too early to tell what the exact estimates will be, but, you know, I think it won't have a bad impact on the economy."

Watch CNBC's full interview with Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin from Delivering Alpha

The 77th United States Secretary of the Treasury Steven Mnuchin joins Squawk Box's Becky Quick, Joe Kernan and Andrew Ross Sorkin.

31:02

[Watch CNBC's full interview with Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin from Delivering Alpha](#) from [CNBC](#).

Insurers are just beginning to put numbers on expected losses from Harvey. Flood damage is typically excluded from homeowner policies, meaning much of the storm's economic loss won't be covered by insurance.

Travelers Cos. Inc., the 12th-largest home insurer in Texas, [reported Monday](#) that it expects Harvey-related losses of \$375 million to \$750 million before taxes. State Farm, Farmers, Allstate and USAA are the state's largest home insurers by market share and will likely incur bigger losses covering claims.

Many companies operating along the Texas Gulf Coast also have yet to publicly disclose the storm's cost. Here are a few that have:

[An AT&T executive says](#) the Dallas-based telecom giant expects to see a drop in customers because the storm displaced many cable and internet subscribers living in hard-hit parts of southeast Texas.

Southwest Airlines, which canceled thousands of flights at Houston's Hobby Airport, [expects to take a \\$60 million loss](#).

Enlink Midstream, a Dallas company that provides transportation and storage services to the oil and gas industry, says Harvey had "minimal financial impact" on its South Texas operations and

regional office in Houston.

[As costs swell for Harvey and Irma, White House sees growing pushback from right](#)

[Mexico drops Harvey aid to Texas, citing its own natural disasters](#)

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HARVEY 21 HRS AGO

Texas sues Dallas-area gas station operator over Hurricane Harvey price gouging allegations



Jeff Mosier, Energy and Environment Writer

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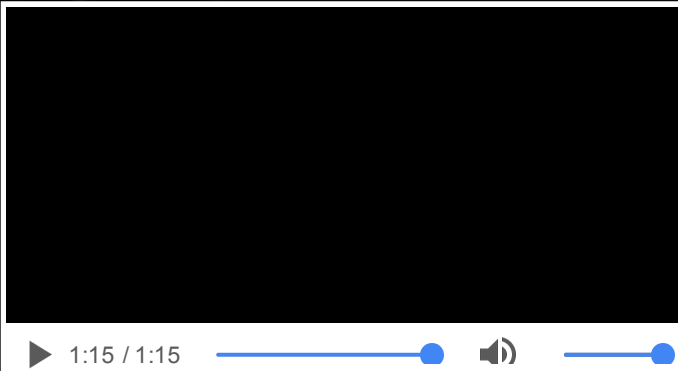
Consumer complaints about price gouging were making waves across social media channels following Hurricane Harvey. Now, Attorney General Ken Paxton's office is taking action against some businesses.

Paxton's office filed lawsuits Tuesday against three companies — one of them a local gas station owner — alleging price gouging. His office received 3,321 complaints related to Harvey.

A statement from Paxton's office said Bains Brothers, which appears to own Texaco-branded gas stations in Carrollton, Richardson and Arlington, charged \$6.99 a gallon for regular unleaded gasoline at two of its stations on Aug. 31 — a week after Harvey made landfall on the Texas coast. The signs at those stations still displayed prices in the \$3 to \$4 range while charging the higher price, officials say.

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There was no immediate response to the messages *The Dallas Morning News* left with the company's owner.



Arlington Voice
about 2 weeks ago



One reader shared this photo with us, which shows a gas station in Arlington charging almost \$7 per gallon! And they're only accepting cash. It's at the Bains Brothers Petroleum station at 2809 NW Green Oaks. We tried calling the available number for them, but it's out of service. Report price gouging to the State Attorney General's office >> <https://goo.gl/2f5EmP>

89

86

703

"It's unconscionable that any business would take advantage of Texans at their most vulnerable — those who are displaced from their homes, have limited resources, and are in desperate need of fuel, shelter and the basic necessities of life," Paxton said in a written statement.

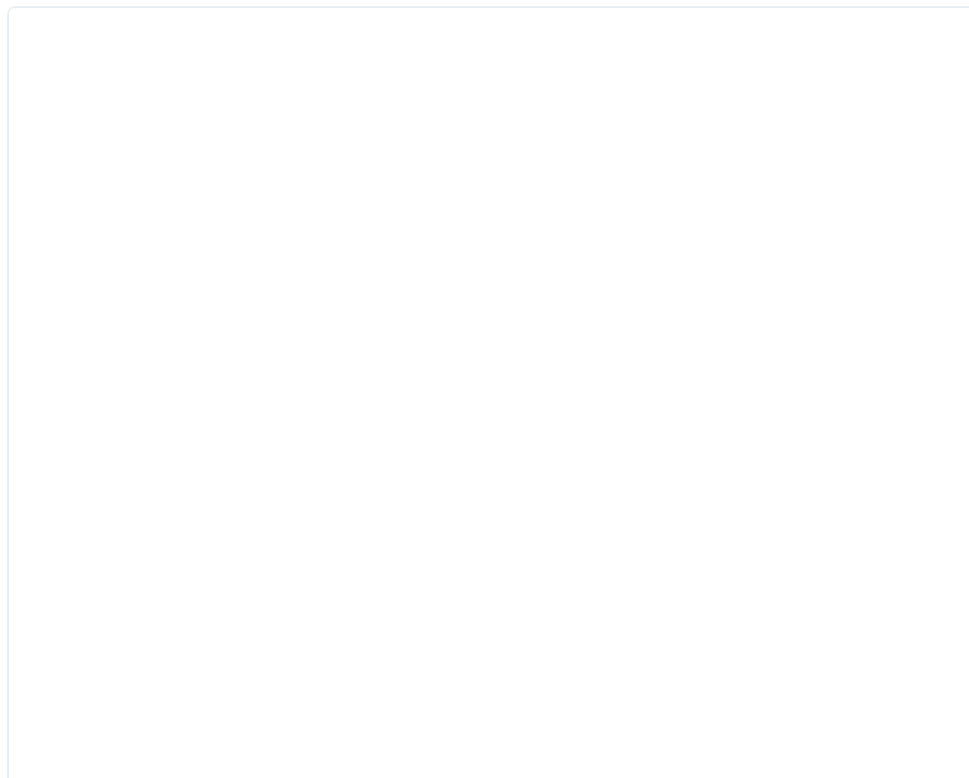
The aftermath of Harvey — mostly flooding — shut down about one-quarter of the nation's refining capacity. That led to decreased gas supplies in some areas besides triggering some panic buying that created temporary shortages. Many Dallas-Fort Worth area stations ran out of gasoline, and prices spiked.



[How panicked drivers are making North Texas gas shortages worse](#)

The two other companies sued are:

- Best Western Plus Tropic Inn in Robstown, west of Corpus Christi, which is alleged to have charged triple its regular rate the weekend Harvey struck the Gulf Coast, according to state officials. Paxton's office said that "Best Western has since ended its relationship" with Robstown Enterprises, which owns the hotel.
- Encinal Fuel Stop, a Chevron-branded gas station near Laredo, is alleged to have charged as much as \$9.99 a gallon for regular unleaded on Aug. 31, according to the attorney general's office.



**Mark Elliott**

@markmobility

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Taking food/water after [#Harvey](#) = looting.
Charging \$9.99/gallon for gas = capitalism.

6:21 AM - Sep 2, 2017

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517

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Messages left at the Encinal Fuel Stop and the Tropic Inn were not immediately returned.

The civil penalties are up to \$20,000 for each violation and an additional \$250,000 when victims are 65 or older.



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Follow the money: industrial waste site in Alsen, local nonprofit organization and neighbors at odds even before the site has opened

BY STEVE HARDY | SHARDY@THEADVOCATE.COM SEP 12, 2017 - 8:02 PM



Steve Hardy

A three-way argument has broken out among the owners of an industrial waste site in the Alsen community north of Baton Rouge, a local nonprofit and residents of the area.

In 2007, the owners of the Brooklawn Drive facility signed a contract with a newly formed nonprofit. The intent was for the company to donate money to benefit the Alsen and St. Irma Lee neighborhoods in exchange for building a new site to accept hazardous waste. The funds were to be used to help build a community center, run after-school programs for children and operate a food program for senior citizens, among other uses.

To date, the company, Louisiana Land Acquisitions LLC, has not given any of the money to the nonprofit, Alsen/St. Irma Lee Community Needs Inc. The company's lawyer said that's because the Brooklawn Drive site has yet to open and start making money, and the nonprofit, which originally sued, has agreed to go back to the bargaining table.

Story Continued Below

Brandon DeCuir, who represents the nonprofit, said he wants to protect residents' best interests, but they "don't want to go bankrupting a company that wants to contribute to the community."

And the latest twist happened Tuesday when another lawyer filed a class action lawsuit on behalf of the approximately 13,000 people who live in the area, saying the leader of the nonprofit is not doing her part to represent needs of the the residents of Alsen and St. Irma Lee.

That lawyer, David LaCerte, said it is "preposterous" that Alsen/St. Irma Lee Community Needs hasn't collected any money and, a decade later, is only considering a renegotiation. The contract also states that some funding was to become available once the facility received its permit, which occurred in 2014.

The total amount of the contract is worth about \$3 million, LaCerte said. Should the suit move forward and the plaintiffs prevail, LaCerte stands to recoup a third of the settlement.

The contract includes a stipulation that once the site opens the company hire an independent monitor to ensure that unsafe levels of toxins are not being released.

On Tuesday evening, LaCerte appeared before a Metro Council District 2 meeting to pass out business cards to try to get more residents to sign onto the class action suit.

Part of his strategy involves getting his six current plaintiffs listed as members of the Alsen/St. Irma Lee Community Needs leadership. There were originally three officers, though two have since died. The remaining officer, Sharon Batieste, did not return a call Tuesday seeking comment.

Batieste, however, wrote in an affidavit that in July, LaCerte came first to her summer camp, then to her home, refusing to leave until she signed an "engagement letter retaining him to represent Alsen Community Needs against LLA."

"When I refused to sign the engagement letter, LaCerte falsely accused me of breaching an alleged duty to the citizens of Alsen and of allegedly taking inappropriate donations to help fund my summer camp for disadvantaged youths and other outreach projects that I organize for the Alsen community. It was my understanding that these threats were designed to frighten me into signing the engagement letter. ..."

Brandon Black, who represents LLA, said LaCerte "came out of nowhere" and tried to insert himself in proceedings where he has no legal authority.

The waste facility operator has asked they be given time to start making a profit before they start paying into charitable programming. The site is still in construction, their lawyer said.

"It's just a hole," Black said.

He said it's unclear when the site will ever open — it could be on the order of months or years.

DeCuir, who represents the nonprofit, said he might seek to move some money around, but he expects the basics of the agreement to remain, just account for the current timeline.

"If they were functional and operational and ready to accept waste, I'd hold them to (the current contract)," he said.

The Brooklawn Drive site has been controversial for years. Environmentalists, some neighbors and former mayor-president Kip Holden all fought against the site.

Company pushing to build a landfill on Brooklawn Drive wins another round in court

Wilma Subra, a chemist for the Louisiana Environmental Action Network, said there have been several concerns: The area is prone to flooding, is near shallow groundwater, and had a poor liner, all of which could cause industrial waste to leach into the groundwater.

"It was just not the place to put industrial waste disposal for the long-term," Subra said. "That community has suffered enough with all the industrial sites and the construction-and-debris landfill."

However, the community was divided, with some standing absolutely against the Brooklawn Drive facility and others willing to allow it in as long as the community was paid restitution, Subra recalled.

"That was one of the most contentious issues," said Marylee Orr, LEAN's executive director.

"We were against it from an environmental perspective," she said. "For public health it was terrible. The whole thing is a bad idea."

Orr also said she always felt a nagging concern the money set aside for the nonprofit would wind up in its leaders' pockets rather than going to programs that would serve the community at large.

The state Department of Environmental Quality denied LLA's permit in 2000 and 2009. It was accepted in 2014 after the company agreed to take waste only from a few nearby parishes, replace the liner and fill in some eroded terrain, said Subra and DEQ Assistant Secretary Elliot Vega.

The contract with Alsen/St. Irma Lee Community Needs Inc. had no bearing on the state permit, Vega said.

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Texas begins long march toward recovery from Hurricane Harvey

Posted: Tuesday, September 12, 2017 10:43 pm | Updated: 10:45 pm, Tue Sep 12, 2017.

Ed Sterling Texas Press Association |

AUSTIN — As contaminated waters receded and mountains of debris from flooded homes and ruined belongings grew last week, a picture of post-hurricane Texas developed and the process of weighing impacts to lives, property and infrastructure began.

Gov. Greg Abbott delivered a series of announcements and proclamations related to catastrophic flooding and wind damage brought by Hurricane Harvey to more than 50 Gulf Coast and inland counties in late August and early September.

On Sept. 7, Abbott thanked Congress for passing a \$15.3 billion hurricane relief package and called the bipartisan action “an encouraging sign.”

On Sept. 9, Abbott wrote to EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, expressing support for a request by the Texas Water Development Board to streamline federal funding for flood and water infrastructure projects related to Hurricane Harvey. The board administers EPA's state revolving funds, which will be used to repair and rebuild water, wastewater and storm water systems in communities affected by Harvey.

Also on Sept. 9, Abbott and Texas A&M University System Chancellor John Sharp, who heads the newly created Governor's Commission to Rebuild Texas, met with Beaumont officials along with leaders of many state agencies. It was the first stop in a three-city, five-day trip to discuss the devastation caused by Hurricane Harvey and get input on how the commission can assist in the rebuilding and recovery effort.

Mosquito spraying begins

The Texas Department of State Health Services on Sept. 6 announced the launch of FEMA-assisted mosquito control measures over the Hurricane Harvey-stricken counties of Refugio and Bee.

Areas of standing water may increase the number of mosquitoes capable of spreading diseases such as the West Nile and Zika viruses, the DSHS said.

Paxton applauds ruling

Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton praised a decision Sept. 5 by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit to uphold the state's voter identification law that was blocked last month by a Corpus Christi federal district court.

A three-judge panel of the Fifth Circuit voted 2-1 to overturn an injunction granted by the lower court. The ruling, Paxton said, means that an interim court remedy is in place for 2017, preserving the requirement of an ID while allowing those without an accepted ID to vote by signing a sworn declaration stating that they have a reasonable impediment to obtaining one.

Furthermore, Senate Bill 5, a law passed by the Texas Legislature this year amending the voter ID law to comply with a prior 5th Circuit ruling, takes effect in 2018, Paxton said. Paxton echoed the U.S. Department of Justice, saying the new law “eradicates any discriminatory effect or intent” and expands voter identification options.

DACA decision pleases AG

Attorney General Paxton on Sept. 5 applauded President Donald Trump's decision to phase out within the next six months the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program created by President Barack Obama in 2012.

DACA granted lawful presence and work permits to nearly 800,000 people who were brought to the U.S. as children by foreign nationals. President Trump left it to Congress to pass a law by March 5, 2018, that would allow affected individuals to continue residing in the U.S.

Hegar reports on taxes

Texas Comptroller Glenn Hegar last week released the total of state revenues collected during the fiscal year that began Sept. 1, 2016, and ended Aug. 31, 2017. Hegar also posted a state revenue report for the month of August.

Sales tax revenue for the year was \$28.9 billion, 0.3 percent ahead of the \$28.8 billion projected in the January biennial revenue estimate, and general revenue-related revenue was \$52.3 billion, or 1.2 percent ahead of the projection of \$51.7 billion. State sales tax revenue for the month of August totaled \$2.48 billion, 0.9 percent less than in August 2016, he said.

Also, Hegar reported that Texas' "all funds" tax collections for fiscal year 2017 came to \$49.6 billion, or 0.2 percent less than his \$49.7 billion projection, and all funds revenue totaled \$111.2 billion, or 1.4 percent less than his \$112.8 billion projection.

Revenue distribution set

Comptroller Hegar on Sept. 7 announced his office would send cities, counties, transit systems and special purpose taxing districts \$668.3 million in local sales tax allocations for September, an amount 6.2 percent more than the Office of the Comptroller distributed in September 2016.

Allocations are based on sales made in July by businesses that report tax monthly.



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Koch Brothers Versus Small Town USA

BY ED RAMPPELL – SEPTEMBER 12, 2017

In Review: *Company Town*

The riveting *Company Town* is one of the hardest-hitting documentaries ever made about environmental racism in America. It is to the eco-justice movement what Barbara Kopple's 1976 Best Documentary Academy Award winner *Harlan County USA* was to class struggle or Al Gore's 2007 *An Inconvenient Truth* was to climate change or Josh Fox's Oscar-nominated 2010 *Gasland* was to fracking. It appears to be a classic case of environmental injustice, wherein people of color and the poor are singled out to bear the brunt of well-funded, string-pulling corporations and businesses.

Photo by [Nicolaus Czarnecki/Company Town](#) Pastor David Bouie has taken on the Georgia-Pacific paper and chemical plant in Cossett, AL, which he believes is responsible for "door-to-door cancer" in the community.

Company Town is co-directed, co-written, and co-produced by two women filmmakers, Natalie Kottke-Masocco and Erica Sardarian. The "company" of the nonfiction film's title is that bête noire of the American Left: Koch Industries, the nation's second largest privately held firm, worth \$115 billion per year and headed by heirs Charles and David Koch, who are widely perceived as the Bond super-villains of the one percent, the billionaires' Blofelds. In this David and Goliath saga, Charles and David Koch are portrayed as the Goliath trying to crush small town USA.

The Koch Brothers own the Georgia-Pacific paper and chemical plant, which produces Angel Soft and Quilted Northern toilet paper, Brawny paper towels, and Dixie paper cups. The factory is located in the documentary's "town": Crossett, Arkansas, a hamlet of only 5,500 residents — many of them Black (some 42 percent, according to the 2010 census) and working class. According to local activists, such as David Bouie, an African-American pastor who features heavily in the documentary, Crossett suffers from "door-to-door cancer," as Bouie puts it, with skyrocketing cancer rates purportedly due to the Kochs' factory's spewing of toxicity.

Georgia-Pacific is the township's main employer and *Company Town* contends that due to the tremendous influence the plant's owners wield, government rules and regulations are flouted — hence the film's title, as Crossett appears to be owned lock, stock, and barrel by the Kochs, who have the town's residents over a barrel. Bouie, who worked at the factory for 10 years, contends that 11 out of the 15 homes on Penn Road, where he lives, have been stricken by cancer. Like Preacher Casey, the clergyman turned union organizer in John Steinbeck's classic 1939 novel *The Grapes of Wrath*, Pastor Bouie spearheads the opposition to the Kochs' allegedly cancer-generating facility — despite the fact that he must use a breathing apparatus four times per day.

Bouie is one of several of Crossett's residents living downstream from Georgia-Pacific who rely on respirators, allegedly due to the plant's pollution that has purportedly caused lung cancer in some residents. According to *The Huffington Post*: "Dolores Wimberly, a former neighborhood resident, says her daughter Laetitia, a nonsmoker, died of lung cancer at 43; and Penn Road resident Norma Thompson says her husband died of lung cancer, while she continues to have breathing problems, often relying on a respirator."

Barbara Bouie, Pastor Bouie's wife — a 25-year Georgia-Pacific employee who says her sisters were casualties of the plant — is part of the pastor's relentless anti-cancer crusade. And the Bouies are joined by many other residents who have come together to demand justice, including several who have become sick themselves: Simone Smith, who was diagnosed with cancer at age 9 and had

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an ovary removed; Jessie Johnson, who reportedly worked at Georgia-Pacific while pregnant and whose son had open heart surgery five days after being born, and Leona Edwards, who lived behind “stink creek,” where it’s believed the factory dumped “bad stuff” under the cover of darkness.

Photo by Nicolaus Czarnecki/Company Town Aeration ponds are part of Georgia-Pacific's waste treatment system in Cossett, AL.

What most Crossett residents have in common is that they are salt of the Earth people who do not have the wealth or political connections and sway to have prevented the billionaire Koch Brothers from polluting their town and evading regulations. However, what they lack in money, lobbying, political donations and the like, the residents makes up for in determination, as the townsfolk democratically organize to resist the ecological devastation they believe Georgia-Pacific is wreaking upon their community.

The town's organizers are joined in their struggle against Crossett's “cancer cluster” and its root cause by various “outside agitators,” including Cheryl Slavant, identified as an “environmental warrior for over 20 years, and Ouachita Riverkeeper,” who helps with health surveys, plus water and air tests. Several chemists, as well as environmental and research scientists, also participate, as does a “Whistleblower” identified as a “former Georgia-Pacific contractor,” who declares: “It took me a while to figure out it was a total cover up. And it took me a while to figure out this was all pollution and this was all poison.... I feel for the community, yes I do. They have been poisoned forever and no one's doing anything about it.”

Nationally prominent activists and figures are also interviewed in *Company Town*, including Van Jones, who served briefly as the Whitehouse Special Advisor on Green Jobs, Enterprise, and Innovation at the beginning of the Obama presidency. According to the *Company Town* website, Jones — a frequent CNN contributor — “provides a larger context in the film about the environmental injustice in Crossett, Koch Industries' political influence in Washington, and the EPA's function to protect Crossett and other communities inflicted with air and water pollution.” (Of course, the documentary was made before Trump appointed Scott Pruitt, who has sued the Environmental Protection Agency more than a dozen times over environmental regulations, to head the EPA.) Investigative reporter Charles Lewis, who founded the Center for Public Integrity, also appears in the film, as do Heather White, former executive director of the Environmental Working Group, and its editor-in-chief, Elaine Shannon.

(On the other hand, for some mysterious reason, camera shy Charles and David Koch, as well as Koch Industries spokesmen, reportedly declined to be interviewed for *Company Town*. Inquiring minds want to know why they refused to appear on camera.)

In terms of outside solidarity, much of the biggest support for Crossett's beleaguered residents comes from the filmmakers of this stellar documentary that is exposing this cancer cluster crisis to national audiences, including at 2016's LA Film Festival, where *Company Town* premiered and I first saw it. Prior to directing *Company Town*, Natalie Kottke-Masocco produced probing documentaries with Robert Greenwald for Brave New Films, such as *Koch Brothers*, an expose that presumably prepared Kottke-Masocco to tackle the rightwing billionaires in her latest 90 minute documentary. Co-creator Erica Sardarian has a background in digital media and TV, producing for outlets such as the Travel Channel, History Channel, E! and FX. *Company Town* is executive produced by Media Matters for America CEO and founder David Brock and Pres. Clinton's onetime aide and Hillary Clinton adviser Sidney Blumenthal.

According to the film's website, “Crossett, Arkansas represents all towns across America polluted by big business.” Together, these filmmakers have advanced not only the cause of environmental justice, but also that of women directors, who are vastly underrepresented in Hollywood. (According to *The Hollywood Reporter*, in 2016 “Women made up just 7 percent of all directors on the top 250 films.”) Their compelling, must see *Company Town* opens September 8 at New York's Cinema Village, with openings in Los Angeles and other cities to follow. For more info see:

<https://www.companytownfilm.com/>.

Ed Rampell

Ed Rampell is an L.A.-based journalist and film historian/critic. A repeat contributor to *Earth Island Journal*, Rampell is a co-organizer of the [70th Anniversary Commemoration of the Hollywood Blacklist](#).

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River authority says flooding has led to death threats

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The river authority says they're getting death threats after homes flooded in Kingwood. (KTRK)

By [Steven Romo](#)

Updated 1 hr 39 mins ago

HOUSTON (KTRK) -- Frustration and blame over severe flooding in the Kingwood area has led to death threats, according to the San Jacinto River Authority.

It all stems from questions over the group's decision making before and immediately after the flooding related to Hurricane Harvey.

Some Kingwood homeowners said those in control of dams and waterways like the SJRA may have some liability for the decision they made before the water started to rise.



He said the SJRA should be investigated, to figure out why it made the decisions it did and to keep the intense flooding from happening again.

"They knew we were going to get a lot of water, and because we did get a lot of water, they didn't know what to do with it. So they said to send it to Kingwood," Rittenhouse said.

The SJRA said that was never its intention. Houston City Council member Dave Martin doesn't think that organization should be the one to decide if its decisions were correct. He's calling for an impartial inquiry.

"We're wanting an independent investigation that gives us the facts," Martin said.

At a press conference days after the flood, Martin questioned the SJRA's decision making of when it chose to release water and how much. The organization said in a statement the comments that day led to harsh backlash.

"A number of statements were made in a recent press briefing in Kingwood that are false and misleading. Since the press briefing, SJRA employees have been receiving angry calls and emails and even death threats."

It went on to say: "The statement that SJRA attempts to protect certain people from flooding at the expense of others is both false and offensive."

"If they're accountable for it we want to hold them responsible. We don't want death threats. We don't want vulgarity," Martin said.

Many residents are exploring legal options due to how the flood waters were handled. Class action lawsuits are in progress by homeowners, including those in Kingwood who are questioning the dam process and the floods that followed.

Read the full statement from SJRA:

"A number of statements were made in a recent press briefing in Kingwood that are false and misleading. Since the press briefing, SJRA employees have been receiving angry calls and emails and even death threats. The misinformation provided in that briefing is sadly misleading residents into believing that SJRA somehow caused their harm when, in fact, the



Even though water supply reservoirs like Lake Conroe are not designed for flood control purposes, they actually provide some mitigation of downstream flooding. The following clip is from one of the many news briefings held by the Harris County Flood Control District. In this clip, their spokesperson clearly explains two key points: (i) that Lake Conroe actually reduces downstream flooding, and (ii) that water from Lake Conroe is a small fraction of the water that flows into Lake Houston. <https://youtu.be/SowuKoT41Rc>

The bottom line is this:

1. Lake Conroe reduced the flooding around Lake Houston by reducing the peak flow going through Lake Conroe and into the West Fork of the San Jacinto River from 130,000 cfs to 79,000 cfs. That is approximately a 50,000 cfs reduction in the peak flows going down the river to Lake Houston.
2. Water from Lake Conroe makes up only about 10 to 20 percent of the flows that reach Lake Houston. The vast majority of the flows are from other watersheds (that don't have gated structures to reduce the peak flows).

The following are several misrepresentations or misstatements made during the recent press briefing:

1. Zero homes flooded in The Woodlands. SJRA protects The Woodlands and its other "friends" from flooding at the expense of Kingwood and other areas to the south.
 - a. First, somewhere between 200 and 500 homes flooded in The Woodlands.
 - b. Second, The Woodlands is not downstream from Lake Conroe. It's in an entirely different watershed -- Spring Creek. The only area of The Woodlands affected by Lake Conroe releases is Harper's Landing on the east side of I-45. The Woodlands experienced extensive flooding due to the heavy rainfalls in the Spring Creek watershed, and some homes in Harper's Landing also had flooding.
 - c. The statement that SJRA attempts to protect certain people from flooding at the expense of others is both false and offensive. Even if it were physically possible to control where flooding occurs, to suggest that we would somehow choose who would be "allowed" to flood by how we operate the spillway gates is preposterous and despicable.



a. Neither statement is true. First, the total amount of water released from Lake Houston was around six inches over a three-day period and resulted in less than 5,000 acre-feet of total volume being removed from the reservoir. The volume of water which passed through Lake Houston at its peak elevation during Harvey was almost 800,000-acre feet, so the impact of the pre-release was less than 0.6%. The resulting flood elevation difference around Lake Houston was imperceptible.

b. If pre-releases had been made from Lake Conroe, the maximum release rate that will not create flood conditions downstream will allow approximately 5,000-acre feet to be released each day. The normal travel time to Lake Houston is over 24 hours, so within three days, Lake Conroe's pre-release would have totally replaced and actually tripled the volume pre-released from Lake Houston, with the result of raising the reservoir back to its original level and perhaps beyond.

c. Worse, if SJRA had pre-released into the West Fork of the San Jacinto River, this would artificially pre-fill the river and Lake Houston. Then when rainfall from Harvey hit all the surrounding tributaries that flow into the West Fork, it would have consequently increased the timing and magnitude of the early flooding, making evacuations, protection of lives, and high-water rescues from low-lying homes even more difficult for emergency responders.

d. Pre-release is a 'fools-gold' solution to riverine flooding. While pre-releasing from Lake Houston may not generally cause any problems to the properties downstream of the Lake Houston dam, this is not necessarily true for other reservoirs, especially Lake Conroe. The risks and problems related to pre-release far outweigh its occasional and very limited benefits. The TCEQ recognizes this fact and does not recommend pre-release for Lake Conroe (see TCEQ pre-release letter).

3. When Lake Conroe opened its flood gates, a surge of water rushed down the river and completely destroyed all structures in its path, including multiple homes in Kingwood near the river. The water in Lake Houston rose over four feet in less than five hours.

a. This is absolutely false and shows a lack of knowledge of how flood water actually flows on the West Fork of the San Jacinto River and how the Lake Conroe spillway gates are operated. This river is located in the coastal plains of Texas and does not have significant topographic relief that can create waves of rushing water and generally does not have very rapidly rising flood waters. There is no question that the flows from this event were unprecedented and were



over 24 hours for water released from Lake Conroe to reach Lake Houston. The water in Lake Houston rose steadily at a rate of approximately seven inches every four hours as officially recorded by USGS gauges during the peak of the storm, not four feet. To imply that Lake Conroe opened its flood gates and then homes were destroyed in the roaring flood waters is incorrect.

b. The flood release gates on Lake Conroe are opened in a measured and careful order under a prescribed procedure developed by dam-safety engineers and designed to protect the structural integrity of the dam while keeping releases below the peak inflows. Spillway gates are opened incrementally and gradually based on numerous variables, including primarily inflows and lake level.

c. The peak flow release rate from Lake Conroe was approximately 79,000 cfs and was not reached until the reservoir was nearing its highest recorded elevation of 206.2' MSL with inflows into the reservoir of approximately 130,000 cfs. The peak release rate from Lake Conroe was about 20% of the peak flow rate into Lake Houston of 400,000 cfs. The peak inflow rate into Lake Conroe was around 130,000 cfs so the reservoir provided significant reductions to the flood conditions that would have occurred without the presence of Lake Conroe to absorb and buffer the flows by increasing the storage within the reservoir.

4. The SJRA does not notify or warn anyone when making releases and has no care or regard for the safety of the residents below the dam when they open the flood gates.

a. SJRA partners with numerous emergency response agencies in both Montgomery and Harris counties during all major storm events as to the conditions at Lake Conroe and the potential releases that may be necessary. SJRA has no ability to order or control evacuations or to serve as the emergency responders for people in harm's way who live or travel within the floodplain or use flooded highways. SJRA's responsibility is to safely operate the dam and the spillway release gates. However, SJRA is in frequent contact with emergency response agencies in the region during any significant storm event and provides them with information about releases based on the amount of rainfall being monitored in the watershed.

b. SJRA maintains a completely transparent public website showing the actual releases from the dam that are underway, as well as the lake level and rainfall rates that are occurring in the watershed at all times. The website is immediately updated as changes are made to the gate openings. The data from SJRA's meteorological monitoring stations around the watershed are updated via satellite communications at 15-minute intervals and can be viewed by the public at



ways to improve their collective performance in accomplishing their respective responsibilities. SJRA is currently expanding the number of the meteorological monitoring stations and is upgrading the technology used by the stations to enable partners in both Montgomery and Harris counties to efficiently link into the SJRA network and share or expand these flood early warning resources.

SJRA has a duty to protect life and property both upstream and downstream of the Lake Conroe dam. We take that responsibility extremely seriously, and we refuse to stand by and allow misinformation to go unanswered. Lake Conroe is the only watershed flowing into Lake Houston that actually buffers downstream flooding by reducing the peak flow that passes through the Lake Conroe dam. To claim that Lake Conroe is the cause of flooding around Lake Houston is a gross misstatement of the facts."

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34em/544px

TCEQ investigating claim that Hurricane Harvey swept Portland plant's material into bay

Tim Acosta, Corpus Christi Caller-Times

Published 4:40 p.m. CT Sept. 12, 2017 | Updated 5:05 p.m. CT Sept. 12, 2017



(Photo: Caller-Times archive)

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality officials on Monday confirmed they were investigating a claim material from a Portland iron production facility was swept into Corpus Christi Bay following Hurricane Harvey's landfall last month.

"The TCEQ received information from a resident regarding concerns that metallic black dust from residents' homes and the Voestalpine plant was swept into a lake and then into the bay," Andrew Keese, media relations specialist with the TCEQ, said in an e-mail to the Corpus Christi Caller-Times.

"The TCEQ is currently conducting an investigation of this complaint," he said.

The plant referenced by Keese is owned by Voestalpine Texas LLC, a subsidiary of Austria-based Voestalpine AG. The company opened its \$1 billion Portland facility in late 2016, but did not become fully operational until April 1 of this year. The plant purifies and processes iron oxide pellets into hot iron briquettes, which are used in steel production for automobile and aircraft manufacturing.

Voestalpine also utilizes natural gas to purify iron at the Portland facility.

More: [Voestalpine opens \\$740 million plant near Gregory \(/story/money/business/2016/10/26/voestalpine-opens-740-million-plant-near-gregory/92669724/\)](/story/money/business/2016/10/26/voestalpine-opens-740-million-plant-near-gregory/92669724/)

More: [Voestalpine earnings down, clears probe on overruns \(/story/money/business/local/2017/02/09/voestalpine-earnings-down-clears-probe-overruns/97692342/\)](/story/money/business/local/2017/02/09/voestalpine-earnings-down-clears-probe-overruns/97692342/)

Portland resident Jeff Howard said in an interview Friday he filed the complaint after observing a reddish hue to the water near the Voestalpine plant in the days after Harvey made landfall on Aug. 25. Howard — who owns a kiteboarding business — used an aircraft to make his observations before and after the storm passed through the area as a Category 4 hurricane with winds of up to 130 mph.

"I knew — I was just waiting to see what was going to be happening with that iron oxide," he said. "It's just everywhere."

Howard posted a video of his flight on Sept. 4 on YouTube, which he said showed a reddish tint to the water that did not exist before. He blamed large, uncovered piles of dark material scattered throughout the plant's property for the change.

"This is all being washed out into the (Corpus Christi) bay," Howard said.



Tug boats push a mini capesize cargo vessel up to the Voestalpine Texas dock. The Austrian company will use the ship's payload of iron ore to test various system at its \$1 billion plant near Gregory. (Photo: Contributed photo)

Voestalpine representatives declined to comment on Howard's claims late last week when contacted by the Caller-Times, but referred to a Sept. 8 statement the company issued on its website. In the release, the company said the plant had returned to full operations and had sustained only "slight damage" to buildings and infrastructure.

The company also pledged to donate \$350,000 to employees and residents in the region who were affected by Hurricane Harvey.

"With respect to the impact of the hurricane on the plant, there was only slight damage to buildings and infrastructures, and this has been successfully remedied over the past week," the company said in its Sept. 8 statement.

Voestalpine is the defendant in a lawsuit filed in May by Portland residents who claim the company is responsible for a mysterious black dust that was found throughout the city on homes, sidewalks, in pools and on vehicles. The lawsuit seeks an unspecified damages.

While Voestalpine filed a general denial to the lawsuit in federal court on June 30, the company did offer to pay for cleanup services to affected residents near the plant. The company has said the dust in question was not harmful and was likely produced by materials used during "temporary operations" at the facility, not during the iron purification process.

Reporter Chris Ramirez contributed to this report.



Residents in Portland's NorthShore Country Club area have complained about a persistent humming noise from the nearby Voestalpine Texas iron plant. Now, one residents is alleging a reddish material blow into nearby waterways by Hurricane Harvey can be traced to the Austrian company's facility. (Photo: Caller-Times archive)

Read or Share this story: <http://callertim.es/2joESqn>

CLIMATE CHANGE

8 hours ago

Homeland Insecurity: How ready is New Mexico for when disaster strikes?

By Laura Paskus



Anson Stevens-Bollen

David Silver thinks about the bad things: floods, fires, nuclear meltdowns, zombie apocalypses.

As the city of Santa Fe's emergency management director, it's his job and, though that last one might sound goofy, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention a few years ago created a [graphic novel](https://www.cdc.gov/phpr/zombie/novel.htm) (<https://www.cdc.gov/phpr/zombie/novel.htm>) about a zombie pandemic moving across the country.

Silver chuckles at the campaign. It was a great way to get people thinking about emergency preparedness, he says. Whether preparing for roving bands of the recently reanimated or a natural or human-caused disaster, the steps are the same: have a [communication plan](https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1440449346150-1ff18127345615d8b7e1effb4752b668/Family_Comm_Plan_508_20150820.pdf) (https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1440449346150-1ff18127345615d8b7e1effb4752b668/Family_Comm_Plan_508_20150820.pdf), keep an [emergency pack](https://www.ready.gov/build-a-kit) (<https://www.ready.gov/build-a-kit>) on hand and know who to trust.

This story was reported in partnership with the [Santa Fe Reporter](http://www.sfreporter.com/santafe/) (<http://www.sfreporter.com/santafe/>). A version of this story appears in the Sept. 13 edition of the paper.

"It doesn't matter what the emergency is; the response is going to be very similar," says Silver. That goes for not only for households but also for emergency responders and the government agencies that help communities recover. The city of Santa Fe, for instance,

has a hazard mitigation plan for how it and its partners would respond to anything from a catastrophic flash flood churning down the Santa Fe River to a nuclear explosion.

Afterwards, it's also the government's job to make sure communities don't suffer from what Silver calls "cascading failures"—anything that worsens an already bad situation, such as wastewater treatment plants backing up, hospitals losing power or collapsing bridges cutting off evacuation routes.

In America right now, these aren't just abstract planning exercises.

Hurricane Irma whaled on Florida after obliterating homes, forests and communities in the Caribbean. The storm came just a week and a half after Hurricane Harvey hit Texas. In the Houston area, as the rains kept falling and falling, water inundated homes and submerged entire neighborhoods. People worried about what was in the water—not to mention the air, as petrochemical facilities flooded and even exploded.

During the storms and their aftermaths, as with any emergency, stories of individual heroism and grace emerged.

But rebuilding communities requires government systems, shored up by experts, standard procedures and taxpayer-funded programs and grants.

No hurricanes will slam New Mexico, of course, but near-equivalents lurk in our drying forests, our two nuclear laboratories and our snowmelt-fed rivers—especially as impacts from climate change challenge not just water managers and farmers, but also public and mental health providers.

Problems with disaster money

Here at home, the New Mexico Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHSEM) works with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to help people over the long haul. It's unclear, however, whether the New Mexico agency can stem its own cascading failures.

After years of promises, questions still remain at the state agency about how some of its top staff members manage grants and finances, how it's spending money and if it's still holding on to FEMA money that should be passed along to the local governments and tribes that the cash is intended to help.

Just last week, the Office of the State Auditor received the DHSEM's 2016 fiscal year audit from independent analysts. It was more than nine months late.

The state agency's 2015 audit, full of holes and question marks, came in nearly a year late. And it appears to show that staff leadership was either unwilling or unable to share the information accountants needed to understand what's happening with its finances and grants. Auditors found 19 significant problems and noted that "little progress" was made in spreading FEMA money around. That money is critically important: Most of DHSEM's budget comes from the federal government. In 2017, the agency's entire annual budget was \$17.7 million, nearly \$15 million of which came from the feds.

But in 2015, it was still holding onto \$34 million allocated for emergencies that dated back to 2007.

Until the 2016 audit is made public, it's unknown how much money the department still needs to pay out for recovery from past disasters. The agency did not answer questions or make its experts available for interviews.

That sort of secrecy, along with chronically late audits, leave New Mexicans in the dark about what would happen if a disaster struck tomorrow.

“Getting aid to people and businesses in times of need is the purpose of this agency,” state Auditor Tim Keller told *NM Political Report*. “It’s an absolutely critical department, especially because the public trust is based on them stepping up when people need help, and in a timely manner.”

Keller can’t discuss the 2016 audit his office just received.



State Auditor Tim Keller

“We want it reviewed and out the door, to bring some accountability and transparency,” he says, adding that the agency’s 2017 audit is due in three months.

“If something more catastrophic were happening in this state, all of a sudden these issues would be front and center, and would be the number one priority of every elected official,” Keller says. “Folks have to realize, this is one area you can’t go in after and work on this. You have to have it fixed beforehand.”

The agency has blamed high staff turnover and vacancies for some of the problems. But rather than hiring employees to fill those positions, it appears to be farming out the work to contractors. Typically, it costs an agency more to pay a contractor than

to hire a full-time employee with benefits.

Since 2014, the agency has also spent more than a half-million dollars on outside accounting firms and another \$1.1 million on IT services.

After a governor declares a disaster and FEMA allocates funding, state and local governments also pony up money for matching grants. Then, once a project is done and inspected, FEMA pays the state using a special account. “As expeditiously as possible,” according to the [agreement \(https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1502899392296-beca921e0be140fd72cade474fbf46b3/2017NewMexicoSignedFSA.pdf\)](https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/1502899392296-beca921e0be140fd72cade474fbf46b3/2017NewMexicoSignedFSA.pdf) between the state and the feds, it’s supposed to send money to the local agency.

In New Mexico, the process is cracked. In 2013, when severe monsoon storms flooded some Pueblos, several tribes were still waiting on millions of dollars from FEMA that had been allocated for disasters that occurred in 2011 and 2012. That year, the Pueblo of Santa Clara ended up making an agreement with FEMA that allows the tribe to bypass the state agency.

And in 2016, the contractor who completed disaster cleanup work at Nambé Reservoir a year and a half earlier faced losing his business because the state still owed more than \$2 million for the work. FEMA had already paid DHSEM, but the state hadn’t passed the money along. Eventually, media coverage drew the attention of U.S. Sen. Martin Heinrich, who pressured the agency to finally cut the check.

While Keller lacks enforcement power, FEMA does not.

If a state fails to properly account for its federal money, FEMA can suspend drawdowns from the special account. And within a three-year window, FEMA can claw back money the state hasn’t passed through to subgrantees.

It remains to be seen how the Trump administration will oversee states with grant funding, especially given the gargantuan tasks ahead of FEMA this hurricane season, and with more than 1.6 million acres of wildfires currently burning in the western United States.

There's another problem, too: When the federal awards are made, the state first has to spend some of its own money, which comes from the general fund. Only after the state submits invoices to FEMA does it get reimbursed. If the agency isn't doing that in a timely manner, the money comes from the general fund, instead of the pot of federal money.

The root of the problem

After Harvey hit Houston, New Mexico Rep. Bill McCamley, D-Mesilla, [volunteered at a Red Cross shelter in San Antonio, Texas](http://nmpoliticalreport.com/416523/nm-lawmaker-helps-with-harvey-aftermath/) (<http://nmpoliticalreport.com/416523/nm-lawmaker-helps-with-harvey-aftermath/>). Nonprofits, churches and individuals stepped up in Texas, McCamley says. "It can show us how really good people are, in the best way possible. ... But helping out after an emergency is one of the basic things government should do."

The government also needs to do something about climate change, he says: "It's real, we're causing it."

That's a lesson millions of Americans learned firsthand this month.

Scientists hesitate to attribute individual events or storms to climate change, but warmer oceans strengthen hurricanes. Irma, a Category 5 storm, was among the strongest ever recorded in the Atlantic Ocean. Harvey dropped more than 50 inches of rain in five days, a record for the continental U.S.

Here in New Mexico, which is the sixth-fastest-warming state in the U.S., average summer temperatures are about 2 degrees Fahrenheit warmer than four decades ago.

We don't get hurricanes, but do experience wildfires and post-fire floods. Droughts are getting warmer and groundwater levels are dropping in many areas of the state. Warming strains rivers and reservoirs by increasing evaporation and decreasing soil moisture, which means crops and forests both need more water to survive.

Recovering from any type of emergency—and limiting those cascading failures—requires functioning and trustworthy government agencies.

The financial problems at DHSEM are just a symptom of a larger problem in New Mexico, McCamley says. "Really, once again, this echoes issues of [mental health](http://nmpoliticalreport.com/348279/feds-to-review-behavioral-health-services-in-nm/) (<http://nmpoliticalreport.com/348279/feds-to-review-behavioral-health-services-in-nm/>) and [food stamps](http://nmpoliticalreport.com/341830/state-makes-shockingly-little-progress-in-mending-snap-scandal/) (<http://nmpoliticalreport.com/341830/state-makes-shockingly-little-progress-in-mending-snap-scandal/>) and [higher education](http://nmpoliticalreport.com/291233/national-attention-for-martinezs-veto-of-entire-higher-ed-budget/) (<http://nmpoliticalreport.com/291233/national-attention-for-martinezs-veto-of-entire-higher-ed-budget/>)," he says.

Many state agencies already can't meet residents' basic needs, and there's no better issue than disaster response to highlight the importance of functioning, resilient government agencies that have the funding and staff they need.

"Once people have been rescued and families are safe, how do you rebuild infrastructure? How do you rebuild homes and get businesses functioning again?" McCamley says. "These are hard and complicated issues, and we have to make sure government functions at at least a basic level, or else this other stuff becomes impossible to figure out."

It's tough for grossly understaffed—possibly even intentionally starved—state agencies to work properly.

Because the state's Sunshine Portal, which includes information about state spending and employee salaries, isn't currently working properly, we can't say how many positions are still vacant at NMDHSEM. But as of March 1, the New Mexico Department of Health, for example, had 735 vacancies throughout the department. Human Services Department has 426; New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department had 350 vacancies and the New Mexico Environment Department, 121.


If New Mexico's state agencies aren't fully staffed and functioning now, how can they help people during and after a real emergency?

"When we continue to demonize government and not provide departments and agencies the resources they need to function, this is what we get," McCamley says, speaking of an anti-government attitude that has been building in America for four decades. "We need to realize in this county that government has an important role, a needed role," he says. "We need to take it seriously."

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Air quality alert in effect Wednesday in central Oklahoma

FROM STAFF REPORTS • Published: September 13, 2017 5:17 AM CDT • Updated: September 13, 2017 5:39 AM CDT

An air quality alert is in effect Wednesday for central Oklahoma, the National Weather Service reports.

The alert covers Canadian, Cleveland, Grady, Lincoln, Logan, McClain, Oklahoma, and Pottawatomie counties.

The Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality advises people with respiratory or heart problems to limit outdoor activity and physical activities due to high concentrations of ozone,the weather service reports.

Motorists are urged to ride the bus, carpool and avoid unnecessary trips. People should avoid mowing, weed-trimming and outdoor burning.

The Tulsa area is also under an air quality alert Wednesday, the weather service reports.

The Oklahoma City forecast follows:

Wednesday: Sunny with a high near 87. Calm wind becoming west, southwest around 5 mph.

Wednesday night: Mostly clear with a low around 63. South wind 5 to 7 mph.

Thursday: Sunny with a high near 93. South wind 5 to 13 mph.

Thursday night: Mostly clear with a low around 72. South, southeast wind 8 to 13 mph.

Friday: Mostly sunny with a high near 91. South wind 9 to 14 mph increasing to 17 to 22 mph in the afternoon. Winds could gust as high as 31 mph.

Friday night: Partly cloudy with a low around 73.

Saturday: Partly sunny with a high near 91.

Saturday night: Partly cloudy with a low around 71.

Sunday: Mostly sunny with a high near 89.

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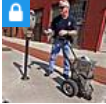
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Wednesday Aug 30, 2017

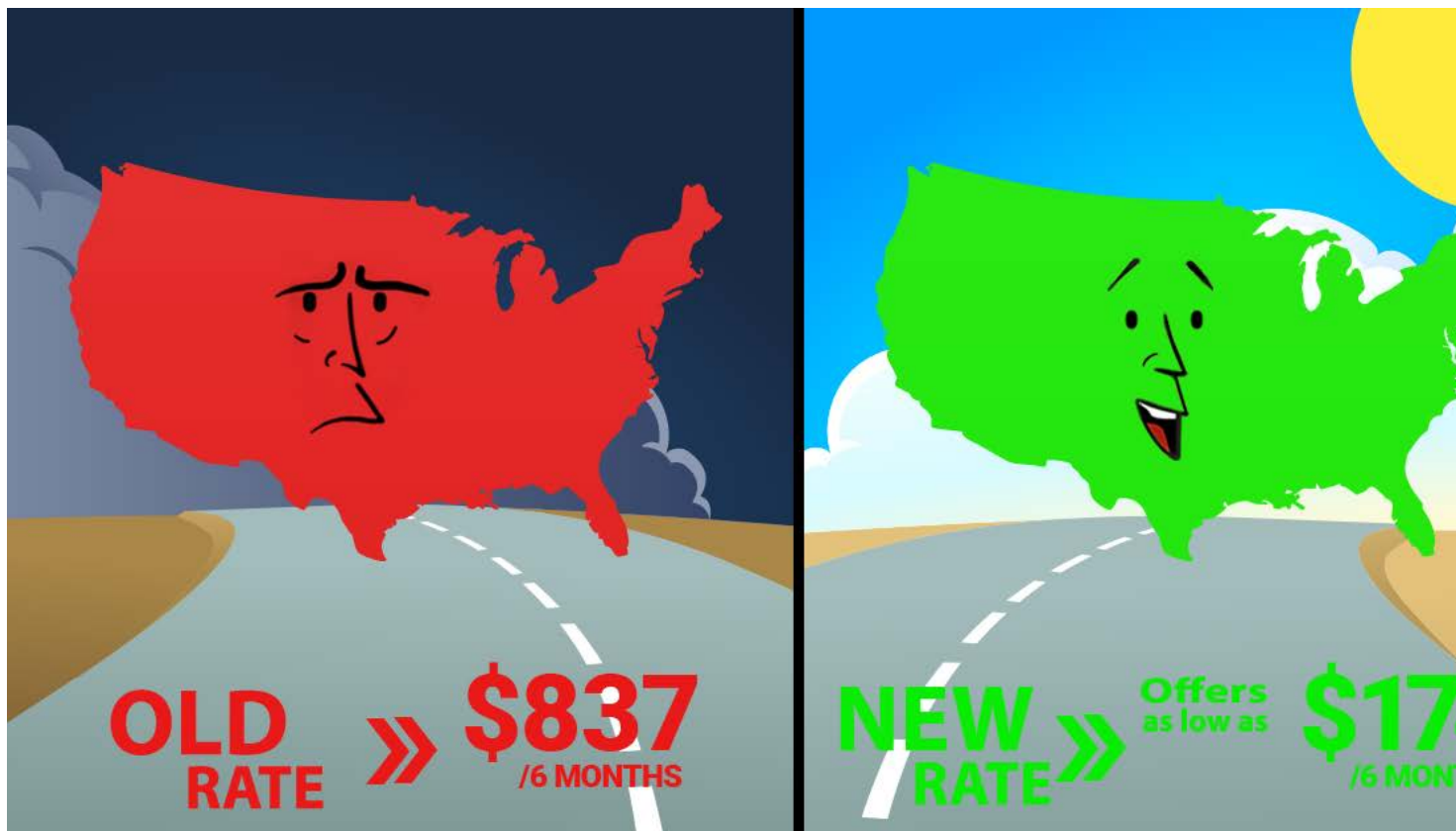
Houston, Texas – Recent articles indicate that only 5% of drivers pay less than \$50 a month for car insurance – but EverQuote is changing that.

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For a long time, there was no easy way to compare quotes from all of these huge car insurance companies. You had to check one site, then jump to another and enter all of your information all over again. Drivers were stuck doing all the work to save money. Now, all that is changing. Thanks to this new startup, [EverQuote™](#), the information you need to help you save can be found in one place. EverQuote™ is not an insurer, but a comparison shopping marketplace. Featured in the Inc. 5000 list as one of the fastest growing companies for 2017, it is not a question that customers are finding what they are looking for - lower quotes.

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Ozone Alert issued for Tulsa County Wednesday

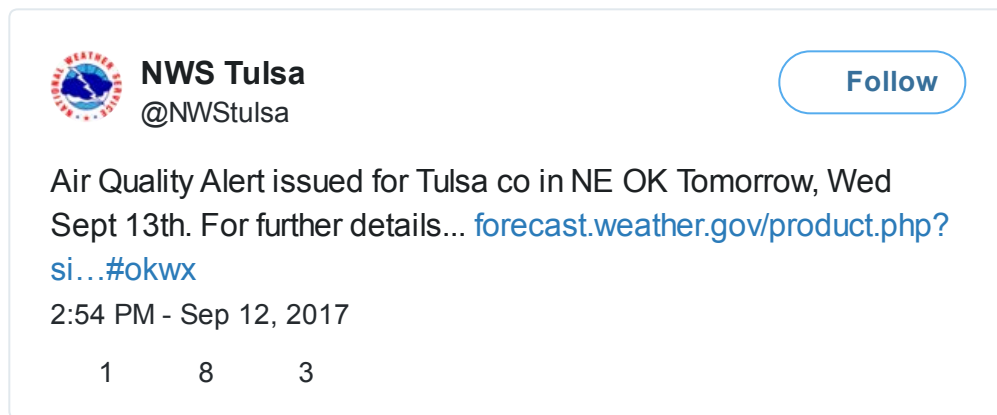
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Tuesday, September 12th 2017



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Ozone Alert issued for Tulsa County Wednesday (KTUL)

Ozone Alert for the Tulsa metro Wednesday.



On warm days with little wind, ozone can build up near the ground, leading to bad air quality.

If possible, carpool, bike, walk or ride the bus to work and postpone errands and refueling vehicles. Avoid using gas-powered lawn and garden equipment.

Ozone affects people differently, but some may experience chest pain, coughing, sneezing, nausea, headache and pulmonary congestion. Active children, adults and people with respiratory diseases should limit prolonged outdoor activity.

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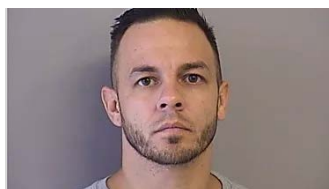
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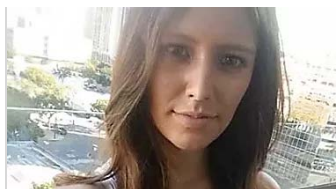
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Meeting focuses on Plum fracking wastewater disposal project



MICHAEL DIVITTORIO ([MAILTO:MDIVITTORIO@TRIBWEB.COM](mailto:MDIVITTORIO@TRIBWEB.COM)?SUBJECT=RE: MEETING FOCUSES ON PLUM
fracking wastewater disposal project STORY ON TRIBLIVE.COM) | Tuesday, Sept. 12, 2017, 1:03 p.m.



FILE PHOTO

Plum Municipal Building.

Updated 19 hours ago

If you go

What: Meeting to discuss a proposed fracking wastewater injection well in Plum

When: 7-9 p.m. Sept. 21

Where: Council chambers, 4575 New Texas Road

A meeting to discuss a proposed wastewater injection well in Plum will feature experts in the field of fracking, a technique to extract oil and gas from rock by injecting high-pressure mixtures of water, sand or gravel and chemicals.

Council President Michael Doyle said he hopes to hear from those for and against the project. A registration form to sign-up for the meeting is expected to be available on the borough's website (<http://plumboro.com>) this week.

"If only one side comes it's going to be a rally, and that's not what we're looking for," Doyle said. "This is strictly for informational purposes. We're expecting a lot of people."

About 200 turned out for a public hearing in July to discuss Penneco Environmental Solutions' project. The Delmont company is seeking permits to dispose of fracking wastewater water and other fluids at a converted gas well off of Old Leechburg Road near the border of Murrysburg and Upper Burrell.

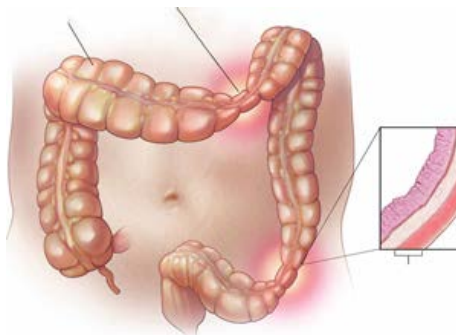
Disposal injection wells are used in the oil and gas industry to get rid of water and brine, both byproducts of shale drilling, according to the state Department of Environmental Protection, .

Studies have connected earthquakes to injection wells in Ohio and Oklahoma. In February, a DEP study linked low-magnitude earthquakes in April 2016 in Lawrence County to fracking.

Michael DiVittorio is a Tribune-Review staff writer. Reach him at 412-871-2367, mdivittorio@tribweb.com or via Twitter @MikeJdiVittorio.

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